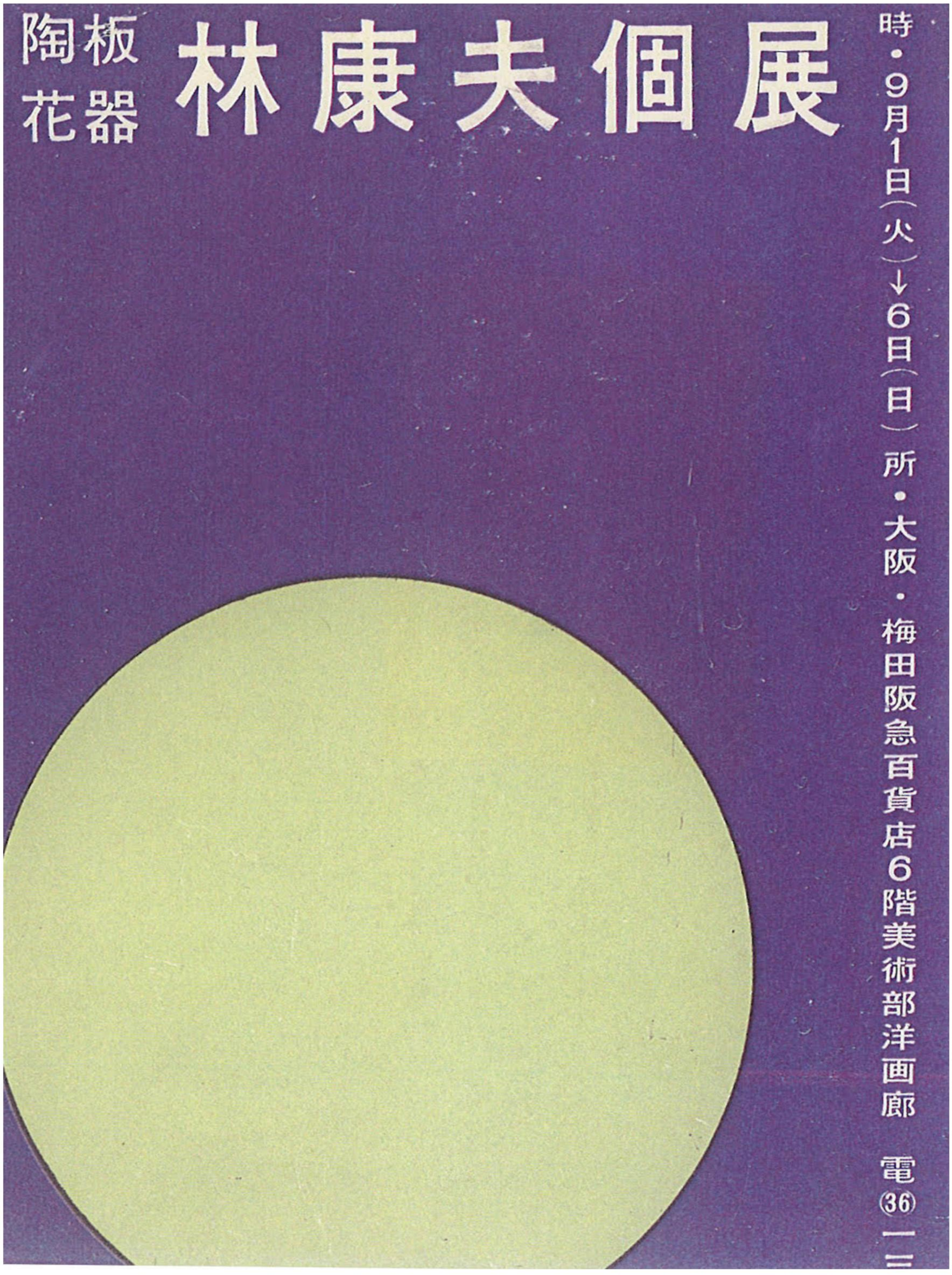
CERAMIC FRONTIERS

SODEISHA & SHIKOKAI IN POST-WAR JAPANESE ART

DAI ICHI ARTS, LTD.



Exhibition poster, Hayashi Yasuo ceramic works solo exhibition, Hankyu Department Store, Osaka, 1950's, Image courtesy Hayashi Yasuo.

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EXHIBITION CATALOG

Dai Ichi Arts, Ltd. is a fine art gallery that is exclusively devoted to showcasing Modern ceramic works of art from Japan.

Since our beginning in 1989, we have been focused on highlighting important Japanese ceramics to the contemporary art scene in New York City. The gallery has introduced pieces to the permanent collections of several major museums including The Metropolitan Museum of Art, The Art Institute of Chicago, Minneapolis Institute of Art, Indianapolis Art Museum, The Princeton University Art Museum, and many more.

We are committed to providing bespoke and leading expertise to collectors, liaising with artists, and showcasing inspiring exhibitions and artworks. We welcome you to contact us for more details.

Ceramic Frontiers: Sodeisha & Shikokai in Post-war Japanese Ceramics

On view: March 12 - 28, 2024

18 East 64th Street, Ste. 1F
New York, NY, 10065, USA
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ASIA WEEK NEW YORK

DAI ICHI ARTS, LTD

FOREWORD

BEATRICE CHANG

Our exploration into the dynamic evolution of Japanese ceramics unveils a compelling transition from the revered primordial craftsmanship to the bold frontiers of contemporary ceramics. Sparked by the diverse exhibitions of Asia Week, our focus hones in on the origins and transformative journey of Japanese ceramic sculpture: What precisely were the origins of what we now know as celebrated sculptural movements? When did clay become the medium to express both tradition and the avant-garde?

This exploration delves into how Japanese artists, influenced by Western aesthetics through various channels, shaped their contemporary identities in the post-war period by blending new inspirations with time-honored techniques. I am delighted to share with you a curated show that presents works that represent this particular blend of influences.

By the mid-20th century, the pioneering work of Shikokai as established by Hayashi Yasuo, had evolved into a larger movement, crystallized by the celebrated Yagi Kazuo, Yamada Hikaru, Kumakura Junkichi, and Suzuki Osamu in the Sodeisha movement. Their work bore unmistakable influence from Western modernist currents: from Barbara Hepworth's to Joan Miró and Cy Twombly, this era signifies a pivotal chapter in the dialogue between Japanese ceramics and Western art.

These artists paved the way for a new line of inquiry in contemporary ceramics in Japan. First, ideation of the ceramic object in direct opposition to its context and its functionality. Then, the elevation of the ceramic medium into high art– in Hayashi's words: "At the time, ceramics were viewed as a second-class art form, but I wanted it to be seen as a mode of expression on the same par with painting and sculpture"– and finally, the rejection of utilitarianism as a basic criteria of the ceramic object. The artists featured in this catalog were among the first in Japan to explore these foundational binaries that now underpin contemporary ceramic thought and dialogue. This journey through Japanese ceramics and its interplay with Western influences reflects not just a fusion of creativity and innovation but a testament to the enduring impact of cultural exchange.

It is an enormous privilege to unveil several works by one of the foremost pioneers, Hayashi Yasuo, whose artistic legacy I have had the honor to exhibit at Dai Ichi Arts for over two decades. My deepest gratitude extends to my team at Dai Ichi Arts, as well as contributing writers Professor Kazuko Todate and Mr. Daniel McOwan. My conversations with Kazuko and Jeffrey Horvitz have been profound, encouraging, and have inspired a deeper dive into this important period of art history. Their combined insights have played a pivotal role in navigating this intricate narrative. Through this catalog, I warmly invite you to learn about shared inspirations and innovations that define the vibrant dialogue among these diverse artistic traditions.

THE ROLE OF SHIKOKAI AND SODEISHA IN POSTWAR CERAMIC ART OBJECTS

KAZUKO TODATE

PROFESSOR, FACULTY OF ART AND DESİGN CENTER OF LİBERAL ARTS, TAMA ART UNİVERSİTY

In Japan, Sodeisha and Kazuo Yagi have long been deified. In the history of Japanese ceramics, it has been said that "it was Kazuo Yagi of Sodeisha who produced the first object," and that "Mr. Zamuza's Walk" (Zamuza-shi no sampo) (1954) was the first ceramic object. Yagi, who was also closely associated with influential critics, frequently employed the term "Obuje (object)" to characterize his own works, a practice evident in his books such as "Obuje Yaki" (Ceramic Object).

However, researchers must maintain impartiality and objectivity when scrutinizing facts and the essence of the matter. Therefore, I have been researching avant-garde ceramics since the 1940s and their historical situation. I have published the results of my research from time to time in my presentations at the Japan Society of Oriental Ceramic Studies in 2005, in articles, books, newspapers, and ceramics journals. My book "Nihon Kingendai Togeishi" (History of Modern and Contemporary Ceramics in Japan) (Abe Publishing, 2016, pp. 69-79) and an article in the Kyoto Shimbun (May 26, 2012) have already been referenced in the United States and other countries around the world, and awareness is spreading to change the old theory.

CREATION OF ABSTRACT CERAMIC OBJECTS BY THE ARTISTS OF SHIKOKAI IN THE LATE 1940'S

During the first half of the 20th century, individual Japanese ceramic artists expressed themselves in two main ways: "vessels for appreciation," exemplified by artists like Kenkichi Tomimoto and Yaichi Kusube, and "figurative ceramics," represented by artists such as Ichiga Numata. The former type of ceramics was not intended as utilitarian containers but rather as vessels for display and enjoyment, while the latter comprised pottery in the form of animals and people.

In the postwar period, a third trend in ceramic expression emerged, distinct from "vessels for appreciation" and "figurative ceramics." The avant-garde ceramics group "Shikokai," formed in Kyoto in November 1947, played a pioneering role in this trend. The founding members included eleven individuals: Sango Uno, Juro Izukura, Kinnosuke Onishi, Yasuyuki Suzuki, Saku Fujita, Shu Arai, Uichi Shimizu, Shigeru Asami, Ryozo Taniguchi, Morikazu Kimura, and Yasuo Hayashi.

At that time, Kyoto ceramic artists were also involved in cross-genre collaborations with painters and other artists, inspired by avant-garde flower arrangers who urged them to "Try making pottery that cannot be used to arrange flowers."

Under these postwar conditions, Yasuo Hayashi exhibited his abstract ceramic object "Cloud" at the Shikokai exhibition in 1948. Soroku Okamoto and Yasuyuki Suzuki, also members of Shikokai, created ceramic objects in 1949. The works by Hayashi, Okamoto, and Suzuki are biomorphic abstract creations that exist independently, not as vessels but as forms in themselves. For instance, Hayashi's "Cloud" is an abstract object not named because he traced the shape of a cloud in the sky, but because he envisioned a vague image of a living being, molded it by hand, and eventually named it "Cloud" due to its organic shape reminiscent of a living organism, or perhaps a cloud formation welling up. Okamoto's and Suzuki's works, akin to Hayashi's, also manifest a biomorphic tendency.

Tomimoto Kenkichi 富本憲吉 (1886-1963)
Decorative Vase with Four-petaled Floral Patterns in Gold and Silver overglaze enamels, 1960; Image courtesy of the Collection of the Museum of Contemporary Ceramic Art, Gifu, Japan

Image of the Shikokai group in its early days, photographed 1949, Image courtesy Hayashi Yasuo.

The term "obuje (object)" made its debut in Japanese ceramic art after World War II, as indicated by a 1949 Shikokai invitation. This term originated from the "objet" of Dadaists and Surrealists in Western art, symbolizing the transformation of existing objects into a dimension beyond through unexpected combinations. In Surrealist painting, the technique of automatism, visualizing the unconscious, parallels much of the visual and conceptual abstraction found in Shikokai's ceramic objects.

In essence, Shikokai's ceramic objects are intricately connected to the abstraction of automatism. This means that the method of creation is not grounded in detailed drawings or plans but relies on rough images or extremely sketchy outlines. The artist determines the form as it unfolds before their eyes during the object's creation. While ceramics impose more restrictions compared to painting, this mindset of "thinking while making" has profoundly broadened the scope of expression in ceramic art.

Ichiga Numata 沼田一雅 (1874-1954), “Squirrel”
Image courtesy of the Collection of Fukui Prefectural Museum of Ceramic Art

SODEISHA'S CERAMIC OBJECTS THAT APPEARED IN THE MID-1950'S: A TIMELINE

Yagi Kazuo 八木一夫, Mr. Samsa (or Zamuza)'s Walk, 1954, Image courtesy The Japan Times

Suzuki Osamu 鈴木治
Stoneware Form, Horse "Uma-No-Yakata" 馬ノ屋形, 1980

In July 1948, Kazuo Yagi, Osamu Suzuki, Hikaru Yamada, Yoshisuke Matsui, and Tetsuo Kano formed Sodeisha in Kyoto. Initially, they focused on creating "vessels for appreciation." However, in the mid-1950s, the Sodeisha artists also started working on creating ceramic objects.

In May 1954, Osamu Suzuki became the first Sodeisha artist to craft an abstract object, "Work." This unique piece resembles a cube with three tube-legs. The inaugural object at Sodeisha was not by Yagi but by Osamu Suzuki. In October of the same year, Kazuo Yagi presented "Mr. Zamuza's Walk," consisting of a tube-shaped form created on a wheel.

In 1954, Junkichi Kumakura also produced a tube-shaped compositional vase, and a little earlier, Yoshiaki Yasuhara (also known as Kimei Yasuhara), a ceramic artist affiliated with Nitten, created works composed of tubes. Yagi's wife was the Nitten textile artist Toshiko Yagi, and Kazuo Yagi was associated with Nitten artists, suggesting the possibility that Yagi was influenced by Yasuhara's work in creating "Mr. Zamuza's Walk."

In 1955, Hikaru Yamada of Sodeisha also began crafting abstract objects. As mentioned earlier, Shikokai pioneered the production of abstract ceramic objects in the 1940s, followed by the artists of Sodeisha in the mid-1950s.

Yamada Hikaru 山田光
Convex Juts in a Clay Plane 陶面の中の凸面, 1976

Yasuhara Yoshiaki (Kimei) 安原喜明
Flower Vase 花挿

SODEISHA AS A PLACE FOR THE PRESENTATION OF CERAMIC OBJECTS BY VARIOUS ARTISTS SINCE THE 1960S

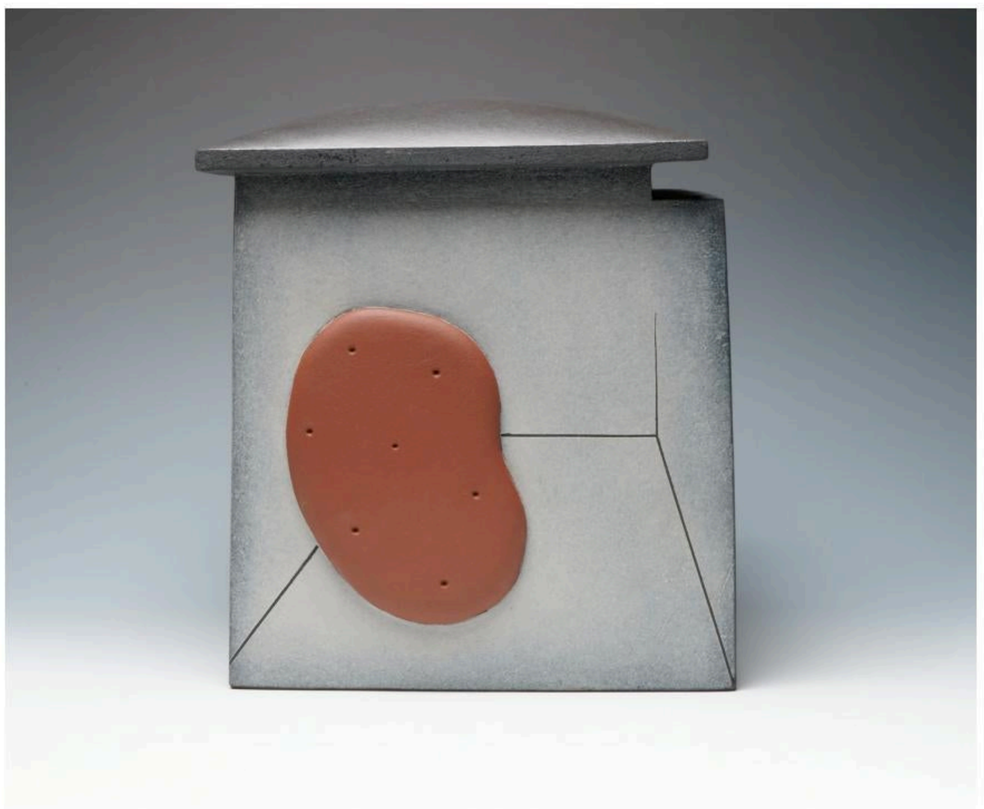
Shikokai ceased its activities in 1956, partly due to its leader, Sango Uno, redirecting its focus toward traditional crafts. Yasuo Hayashi subsequently joined Sodeisha, and over time, the group attracted various artists from across Japan, including Hideto Satonaka, Tadayasu Sasayama, Satoru Hoshino, and Ryosaku Miwa (Ryukisho Miwa).

In the 1970s, the overall quality of diverse Japanese ceramic objects experienced a notable increase. Both Yasuo Hayashi and Kazuo Yagi dedicated themselves to creating their representative works during this period. Yagi produced objects in black pottery and unglazed stoneware, and Sodeisha continued its activities until 1998. At the age of 95, Hayashi remains an active artist, crafting objects that incorporate elements of visual trickery and illusion, skillfully deceiving the viewer's eyes using geometry and perception.

CONCLUSION

Abstract ceramic objects, symbolizing Japanese avant-garde ceramics, were pioneered in the 1940s by Yasuo Hayashi and other artists of Shikokai, expanding further in the mid-1950s with contributions from Osamu Suzuki of Sodeisha, followed by Kazuo Yagi and others. Sodeisha continued its legacy for 50 years, serving as a platform for various ceramic artists to showcase innovative forms and enriching the expression of Japanese ceramic art.

The groundbreaking efforts of Shikokai, initiating the development of abstract ceramic objects, and the subsequent expansion facilitated by Sodeisha, are crucial chapters in the history of Japanese ceramics. However, it is imperative to accurately recognize the sequence and historical background of these activities.



Hayashi Yasuo 林康夫 (b. 1928)
No. 3 Memory of a Fable 寓舎の記憶 05-A, 2005; With Signed Wood Box
Stoneware; (h) 11.6" x (w) 10.2"x (d) 8.7"

Previous page: Yamada Hikaru 山田光 (1923-2001) & Masuda Studio Gallery, No. 343 Kasukanaru Koe (“Fading Voice”) かすかなる声, 2000, Signed Hikaru 光, Published ”CLAY WORK BY YAMADA HIKARU”, 2004, Sekaishisosha Co., Ltd, Stoneware; (h) 6.9” x (w) 20.6” x (d) 3.4”. Also pictured on page 84-85.

Hayashi Yasuo, Signature, 1990

戦後の陶芸オブジェに四耕会と走泥社の役割における

外舘和子

多摩美術大学教授

日本では長らく走泥社や八木一夫を神格化し、日本陶磁史上、最初のオブジェを制作したのは走泥社の八木一夫であるとされ、《ザムザ氏の散歩》（1954）が最初の陶芸オブジェであると言われてきた。その背景には、八木が有力な評論家と親しかったこと、八木自身が『オブジェ焼』などの自著をはじめ、自ら積極的に自作について「オブジェ」の語を使用したことなどが挙げられる。

しかし、研究者は常に冷静に客観的に事実や本質を精査する必要がある。そこで筆者は、1940年代の前衛陶芸やその時代状況を調査し、2005年の東洋陶磁学会発表や論文、著書、新聞、陶芸の専門誌などで、随時、研究の成果を発表してきた。既に私の著書『日本近現代陶芸史』（阿部出版、2016、特に69〜79頁）や京都新聞（2012年5月26日）の記事は米国はじめ世界各国で参照され、旧説を改める認識が広がりつつある。

本稿ではそれらを踏まえ、日本の新しいタイプの造形、陶芸のオブジェにおいて、四耕会と走泥社の果たした役割を短く記す。

1940年代後半の四耕会による抽象的なオブジェの制作

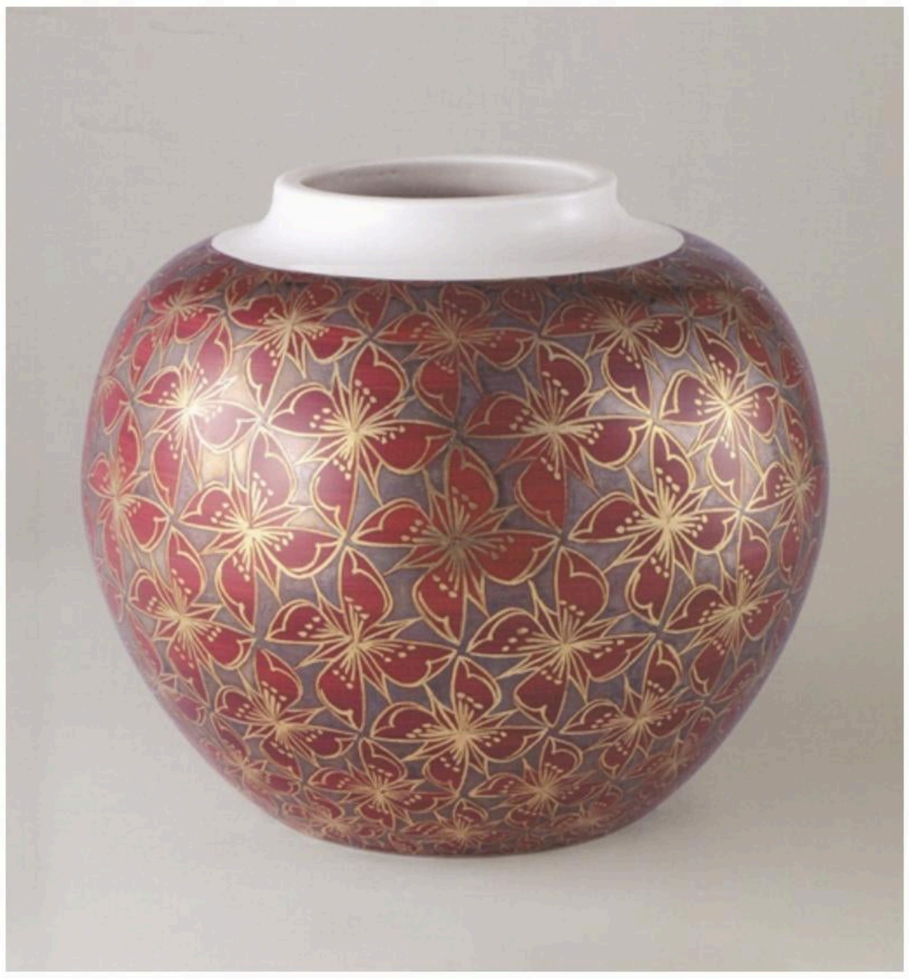
日本では、１９世紀まで職人や窯元の親方による産業的な陶磁器生産が行われていたが、20世紀の初めに、陶芸の個人作家（自らの創意を自らの手で形にする陶芸家）が現れる。20世紀前半の個人の陶芸家の表現としては大きく2種類あり、一つは富本憲吉や楠部彌弌らによる「鑑賞主体の器」であり、もう一つは沼田一雅らによる「具象的陶芸」であった。前者は器の形はしているが、実用の容器ではなく飾って楽しむための器であり、後者は動物や人などの形のやきものであった。

しかし、戦後になると、「鑑賞主体の器」や「具象的陶芸」とは異なる第3の新たな傾向の陶芸表現が現れる。

その先陣を切ったのが、1947年11月に京都で結成された前衛陶芸集団「四耕会」である。創立メンバーは、宇野三吾、伊豆蔵寿郎、大西金之助、鈴木康之、藤田作、荒井衆、清水卯一、浅見茂、谷口良三、木村盛和、林康夫の11名であった。

当時、京都の陶芸家は、画家などとのジャンルを超えた付き合いも盛んになり、また前衛華道家から「花など活けられないやきものを作ってみては」などの挑発を受けてもいた。

そのような戦後の状況下、1948年には四耕会の展覧会で林康夫が最初の抽象的な陶芸オブジェ《雲》を発表し、四耕会の作家では岡本素六や鈴木康之も1949年にオブジェ作品を制作した。それらは、造形そのもので自立するバイオモルフィックな抽象的作品である。
1940年代後半のそうした四耕会の陶芸オブジェは、その抽象性や成形手法に特徴がある。例えば林の《雲》は、空の雲を見てその形をなぞったものではなく、漠とした人のようなイメージを抱き、土を手捻りしながら成形し、最終的にそのムクムクと湧き上がるような生命形態的な造形が雲のようにも見えたので「雲」と名付けた抽象的造形である。岡本や鈴木の作品も、林の作品同様にバイオモルフィックな傾向を示す。



富本憲吉 (1886-1963) 器

戦後日本の陶芸の世界で「オブジェ」という語をいち早く使い始めた例も1949年の四耕会の案内状に見られる。「オブジェ」という言葉の由来は西洋美術のダダイストやシュルレアリストらの「オブジェ」で、それは既存のモノの意外な組み合わせ等で別次元の「物体」へと変換する表現だが、シュルレアリストの絵画においては、無意識を視覚化するオートマティスムの手法がある。

四耕会の陶芸オブジェはいわばそのオートマティスムの抽象性とリンクする。即ち、綿密な図面や計画に拠るのではなく、大まかなイメージや極ラフなスケッチを起点に、作りながら目の前に立ち現れてくる形を見定める、といった創造の手法である。勿論、陶芸は絵画よりも制約は大きいが、「作りながら考える」というこの姿勢はその後、陶芸表現を大いに拡張していった。

沼田一雅 (1874-1954), 《栗鼠》
福井県陶芸館

1950年代半ばに現れた走泥社の陶芸オブジェ

八木一夫 (1918-1979)
《ザムザ氏の散歩》1954

鈴木治 (1926-2001)
《馬ノ屋形》1980

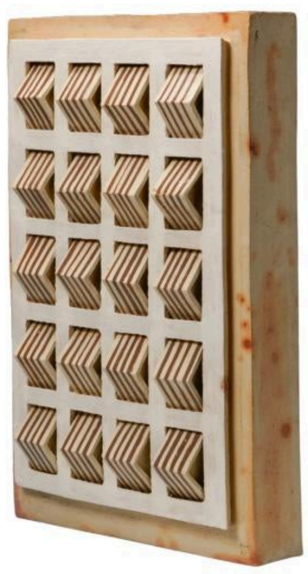
1948年7月、京都で八木一夫、鈴木治、山田光、松井美介（まつい・よしすけ）、叶哲夫の5人が走泥社を結成する。彼らは、初めのうち「鑑賞主体の器」を手がけていた。しかし、1950年代半ばになると走泥社の作家たちもオブジェに取り組むようになる。

1954年５月、鈴木治が走泥社の作家としては初めて抽象的なオブジェ《作品》を発表した。キューブに３本の脚をつけたようなユニークな作品である。走泥社における最初のオブジェは八木ではなく鈴木治であった。さらに同年10月には八木一夫が《ザムザ氏の散歩》を発表した。それはろくろで挽いたチューブ状の形を構成したものである。

1954年には熊倉順吉もチューブ状の構成的花器を制作しており、それより少し早く日展所属の陶芸家、安原喜明がチューブの造形を行っている。八木は妻が日展の染織作家八木敏子であり、日展作家と付き合いがあったので、八木が安原の作品に影響を受けて《ザムザ氏の散歩》を制作した可能性もある。

1955年には、走泥社の山田光も抽象的なオブジェを作るようになった。

以上述べてきたように、1940年代にまず「四耕会」が陶芸オブジェを開拓し、続いて1950年代半ばに「走泥社」の作家がオブジェを制作するようになったのである。



山田光 (1924-2001)
《陶面の中の凸面》1976

安原喜明 (1906-1980)
花挿

1960年代以降の様々な陶芸オブジェの発表の場としての走泥社

「四耕会」はリーダーの宇野三吾が伝統工芸へと方向転換したこともあり、1956年に活動を停止している。林康夫も発表の場を走泥社に移し、その後、走泥社には笹山忠保1939ー、星野 暁1945年 -、三輪龍作(三輪龍気生)1940ーら全国から様々な作家が参加するようになった。1970年代には、日本の様々な陶芸オブジェのレベルが全体的に上がり、林康夫も八木一夫もそれぞれに代表作を手がけていった。八木は黒陶や焼締のオブジェを制作し、走泥社は1998年まで続いた。林は95歳の今もなお現役作家として鑑賞者の視覚を惑わすような視覚トリック的な要素のあるオブジェを制作している。

結びに

日本の前衛陶芸の象徴であるオブジェは、1940年代に林康夫ら四耕会の作家たちが切り拓き、1950年代半ばに走泥社の鈴木治が、続いて八木一夫らが拡張していった。走泥社は50年続き、様々な陶芸家たちに新しい造形を発表する場を与え、日本の陶芸表現を拡げた。

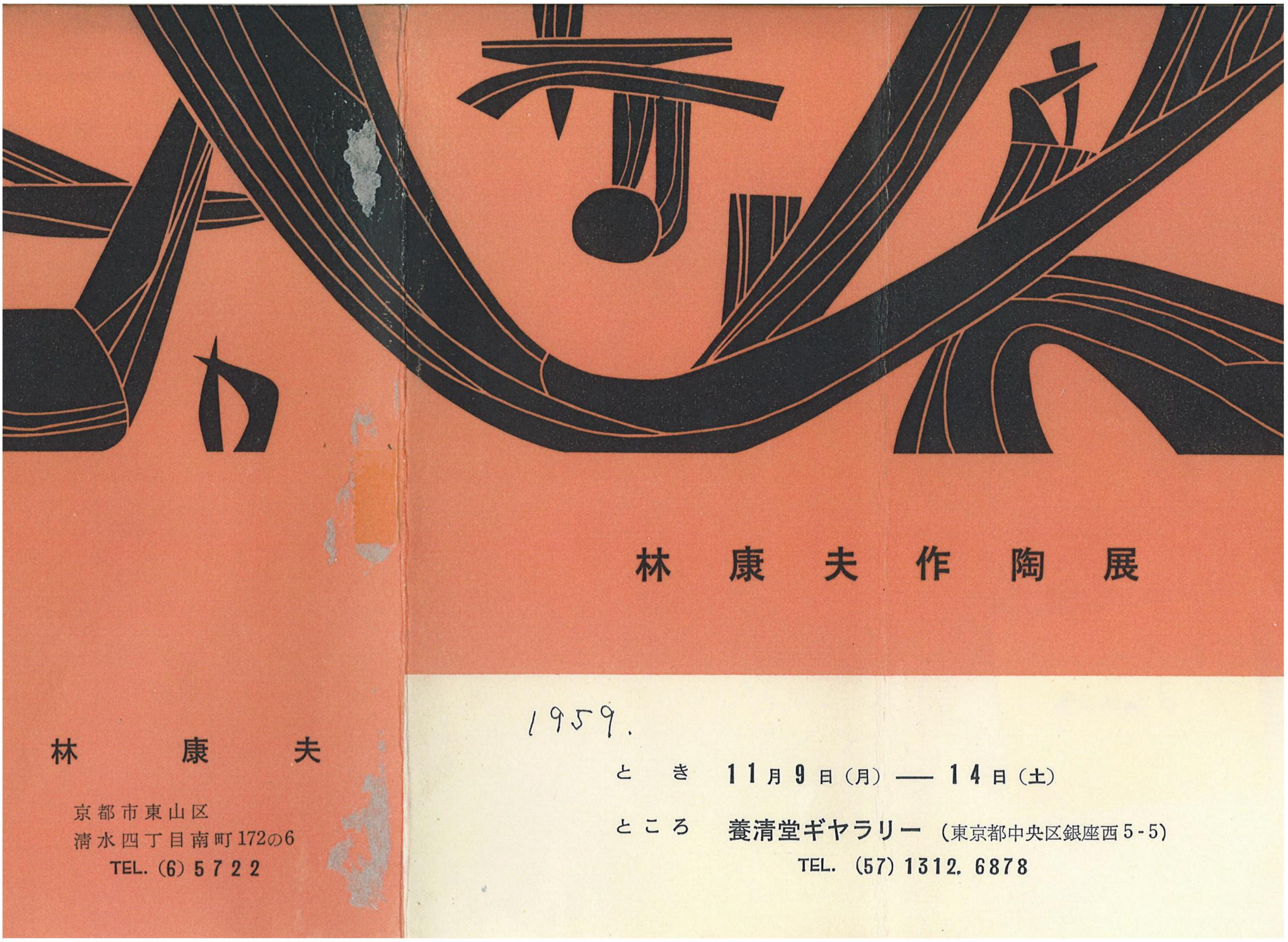
陶芸オブジェ先発の四耕会の先駆性、その後の走泥社による広がりは、いずれも、日本陶磁史において重要である。但しその順序と歴史的経緯は正しく認識されるべきである。

山田光 (1923-2001)
かすかなる声, 2000

SHIKOKAI

四耕会

Hayashi Yasuo 林康夫 (b. 1928)
Work 65-17 , 1965
With Signed Wood Box
Stoneware
(h) 16" x (w) 11.5" x (d) 9.5"



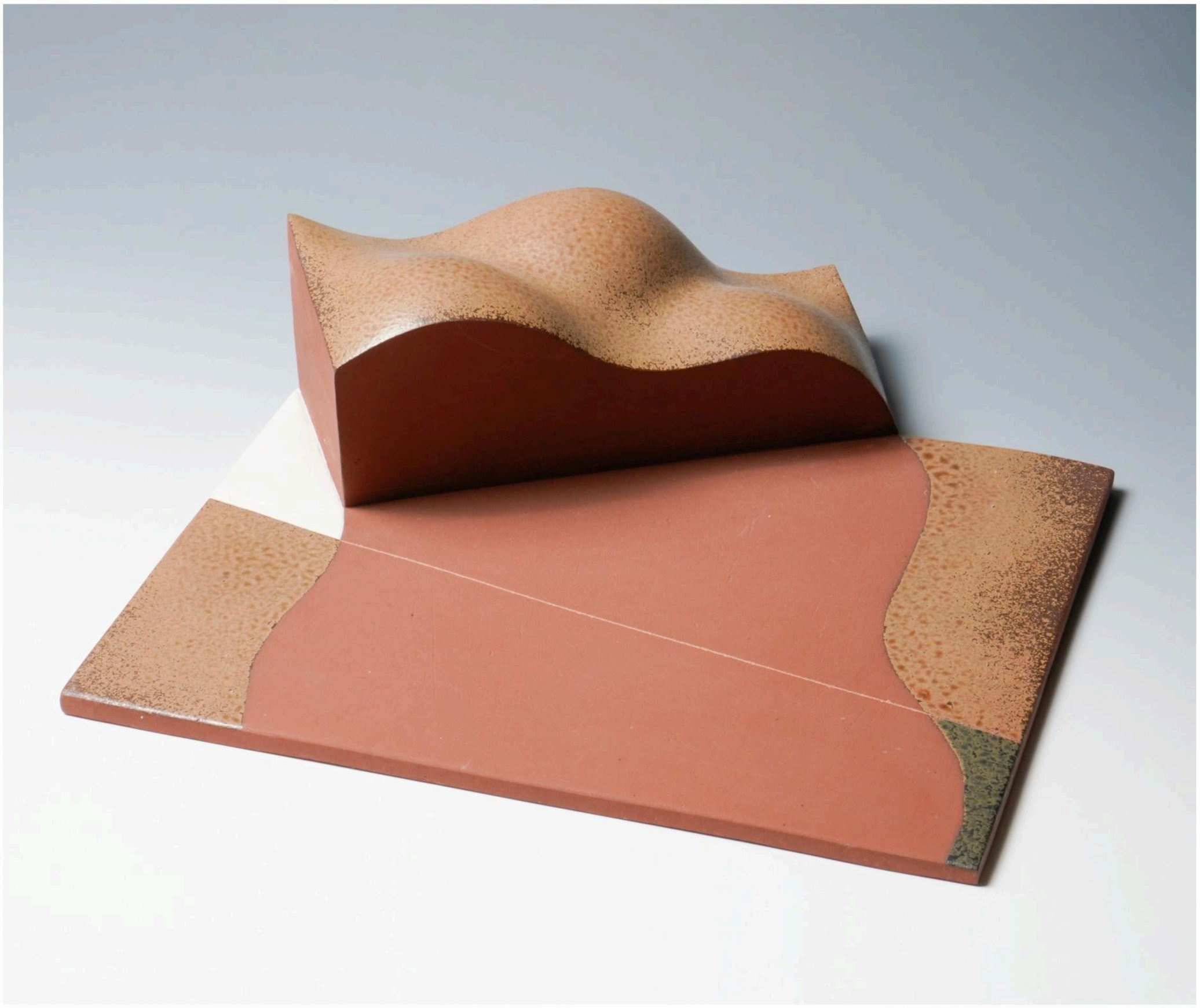
TRUCK III

The postcard above features an image from Hayashi Yasuo's solo exhibition, held in November 1959 at Yoseido Gallery in Ginza, Tokyo. This exhibition marked a significant milestone in the acknowledgment of ceramics as a "high art" form, equivalent to painting and other sculptural genres.

The graphics on the postcard exhibit biomorphic forms seamlessly blended with the visual language of geometric abstraction. Notably, the utilization of negative space in the two-dimensional graphic design mirrors Hayashi's unique approach to negative space in ceramic art.

The relationship between negative space, or the absence of form, is not immediately obvious in the three-dimensional ceramic medium. Hayashi explored this concept through his decorative surface treatments in his sculptures. Influenced by Western geometric abstraction, negative space became a formal element intrinsic to the compositional dialogue.

One can observe Hayashi's exploration of this formal consideration in his piece "Truck III." This sculpture, crafted from forms cut from another artwork, literally consists of the clay body absent from the initial creation. "Truck III" delves into the capability of clay to convey absence through a theoretical and systemic examination of things.



Hayashi Yasuo 林康夫 (b. 1928)
TRUCK III 軌, 1978
With Signed Wood Box, Signed, '78
White Engobe, Biscuit Fired Stoneware With Irabo Glaze
(h) 4” x (w) 14” x (d) 14.2”

Hayashi Yasuo 林康夫 (b. 1928)
No. 1, Work ’66-30, 1966
With Signed Wood Box
Stoneware with red slip
(h) 10.2” x (w) 11.0” x (d) 10.0”

TWO YASUO’S

In the early 1970s, Hayashi Yasuo underwent a change in the Kanji characters of his given name, transitioning from “靖雄” (as pictured to the right) to “康夫.” Despite both versions being phonetically read as “Yasuo,” this shift is noteworthy in his artistic journey. This piece exemplifies his early works, signed with the characters “Yasuo 靖雄,” distinct from the later pieces that bear the signature “Yasuo 康夫.”

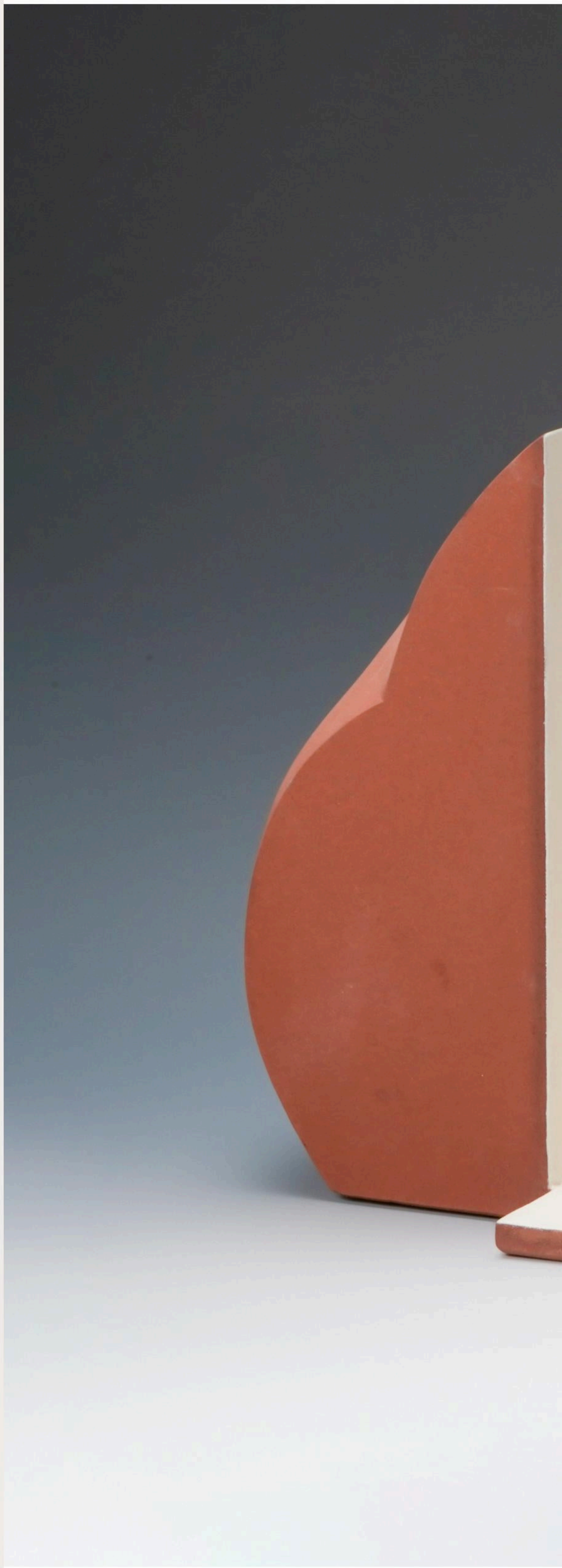
This work shows Hayashi’s initial exploration of red slip applied to clay, which resulted in a texture reminiscent of rusted iron. It delves into the materiality of ceramics, akin to Osamu's early investigations in the field.

Hayashi Yasuo & Hayashi Teruko sat by his work on the opening night of Yasuo's solo exhibition at Dai Ichi Arts, 2005

Pictured behind them is the piece pictured here, Seat, made in 1978.

Hayashi's "Seat, 1978" stands as a testament to the contextual stage of 70's minimalism and sculptural movements that invite contemplation through sculpturally static, yet organically complex forms. In particular, the piece echoes the minimalist ethos of the 1970s' contemporary artists. One might also recall the stark, futuristic set designs seen in "2001: A Space Odyssey."

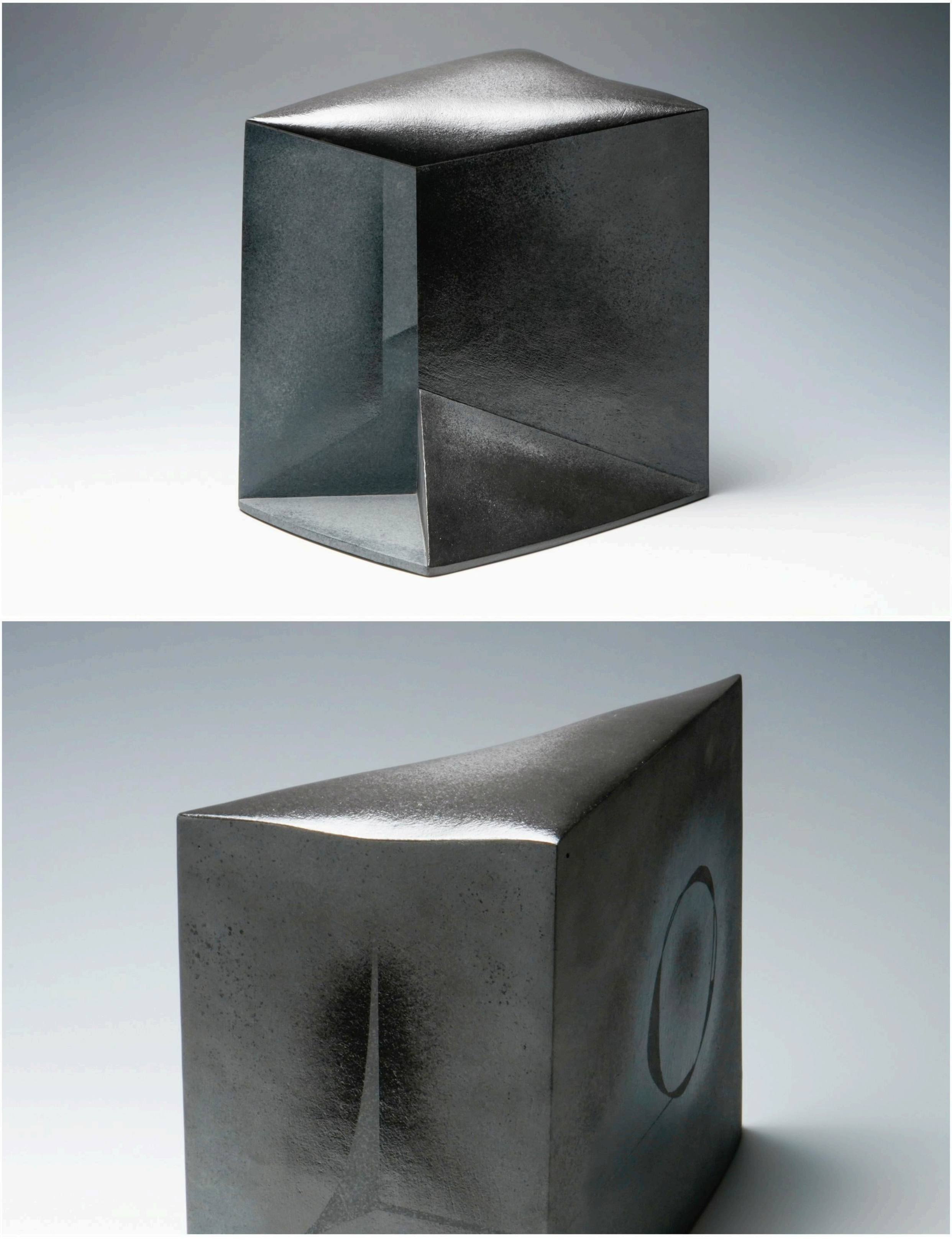
Hayashi Yasuo 林康夫 (b. 1928)
Seat 座, 1978
With Signed Wood Box, Signed, '78
White Englobe, Biscuit Fired Stoneware
(h) 12.2" x (w) 18.4" x (d) 6.8"

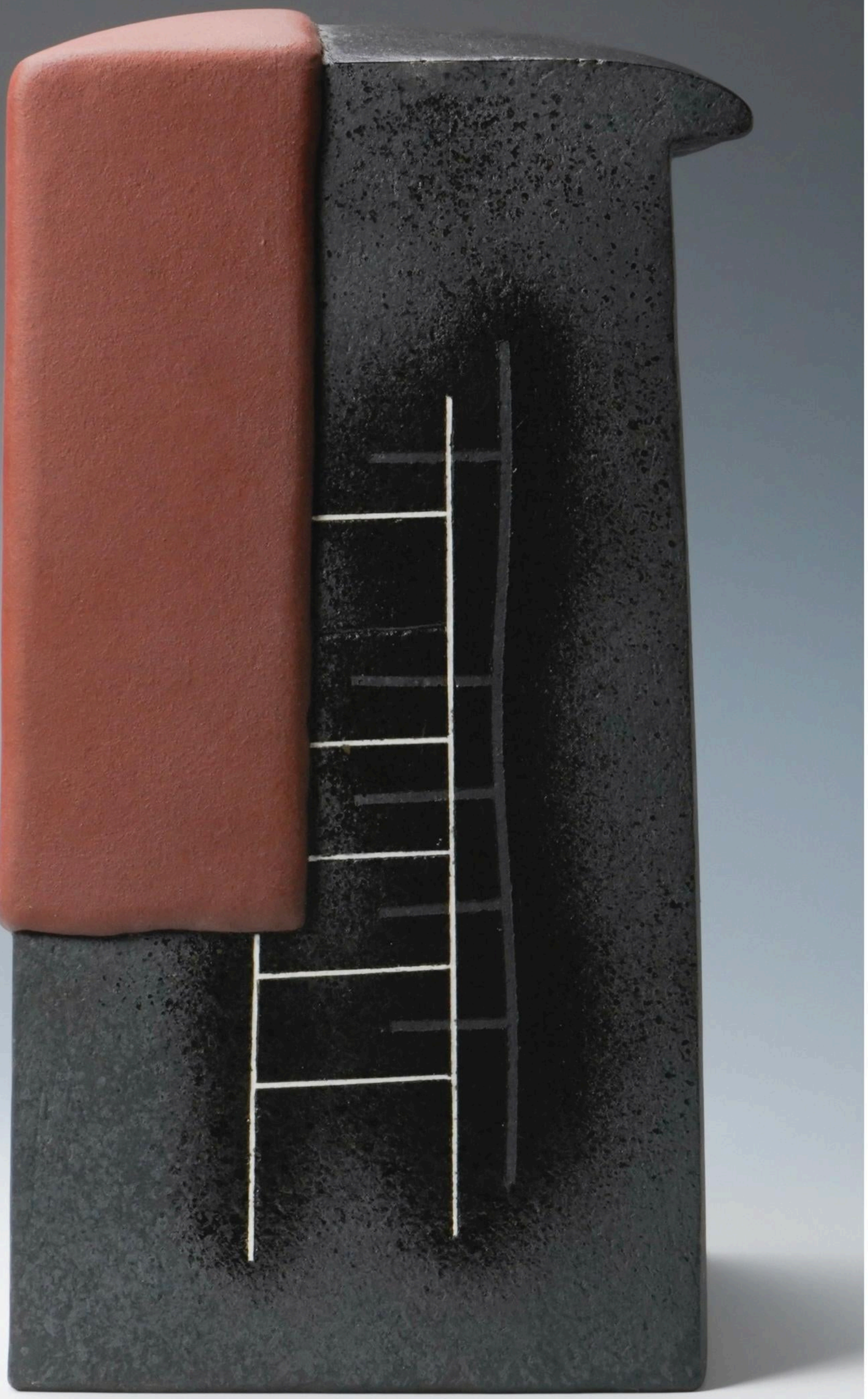


Op art, a term derived from 'optical art,' involves artists utilizing visual perception tricks and manipulating perspective rules to generate illusions of vibrancy, movement, and tension. Influenced by the artistic movements of the 60s, Hayashi incorporates perspective and depth in many of his sculptures to craft illusions within his work. Jesus Rafael Soto, a Venezuelan artist, similarly delved into the exploration of optical effects, creating illusions of movement, exemplified in his notable piece, "Light Trap."

(Above) Jesus Rafael Soto (1923–2005), Light Trap 1965
Construction of wood and nylon with printed paper
(h) 18.5" x (w) 11.7" x (d) 5.2"; Tate Britain

(Right) Hayashi Yasuo 林康夫 (b. 1928)
No. 2, No Sound G ,1992
With Signed Wood Box
Stoneware; (h) 11.8" x (w) 13.1" x (d) 11.6"





Hayashi Yasuo 林康夫 (b. 1928)
Memory of House 家の記憶, 2008
Signed ’08 Yasuo at the bottom
With Signed Wood Box
Stoneware; (h) 9.5” x (w) 5” x (d) 5”

Hayashi Yasuo 林康夫
(b. 1928)
Memory of a House #1
寓舍, 2003
With Signed Wood Box
Stoneware
(h) 9.1" x (w) 17" x (d) 6"

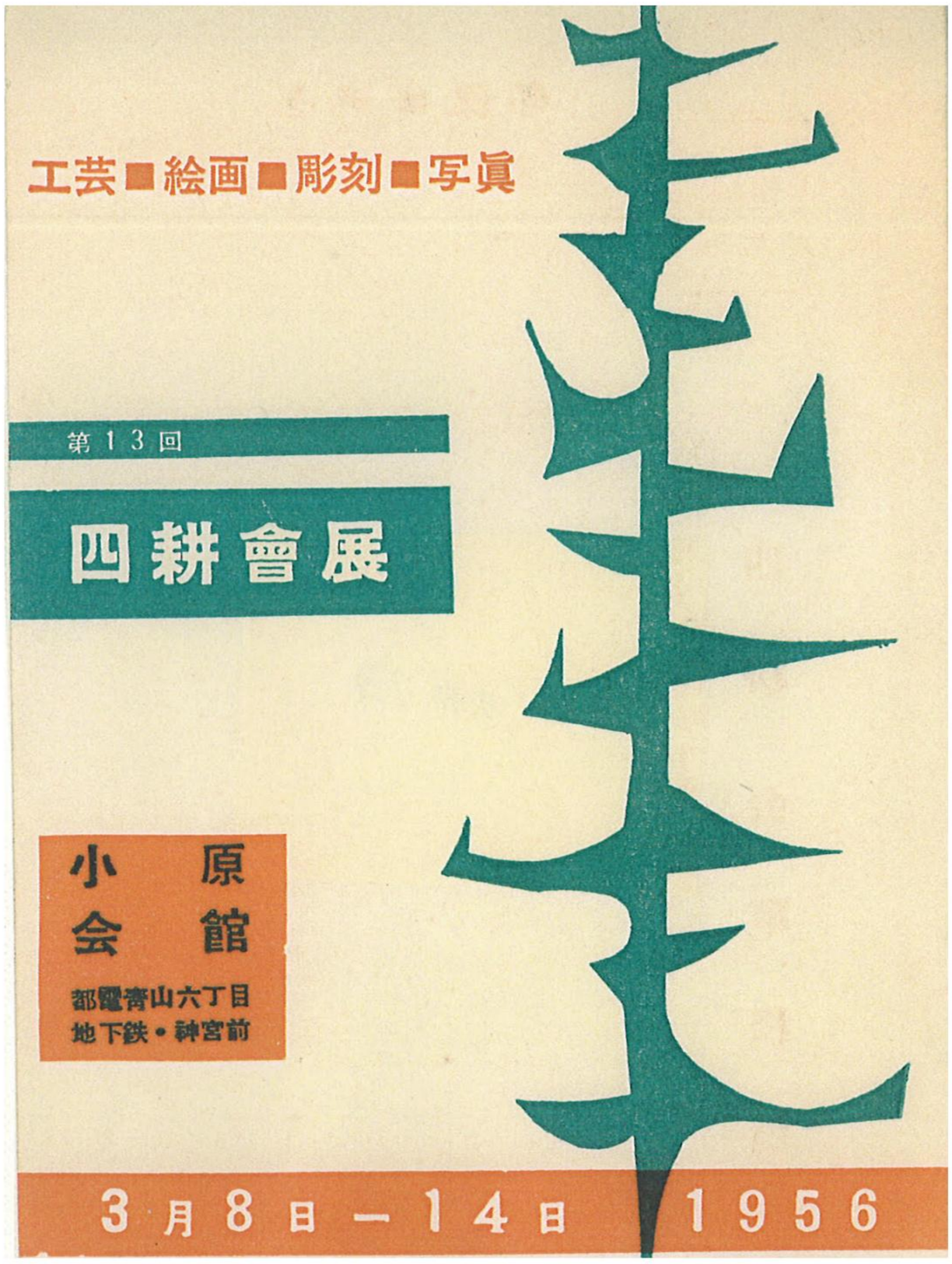
Hayashi Yasuo 林康夫 (b. 1928)
An Encounter 語らい ‘78 , 1978
With Signed Wood Box
(h) 11.7" x (w) 13.7" x (d) 9.3"
Stoneware

LADDERS IN TIME

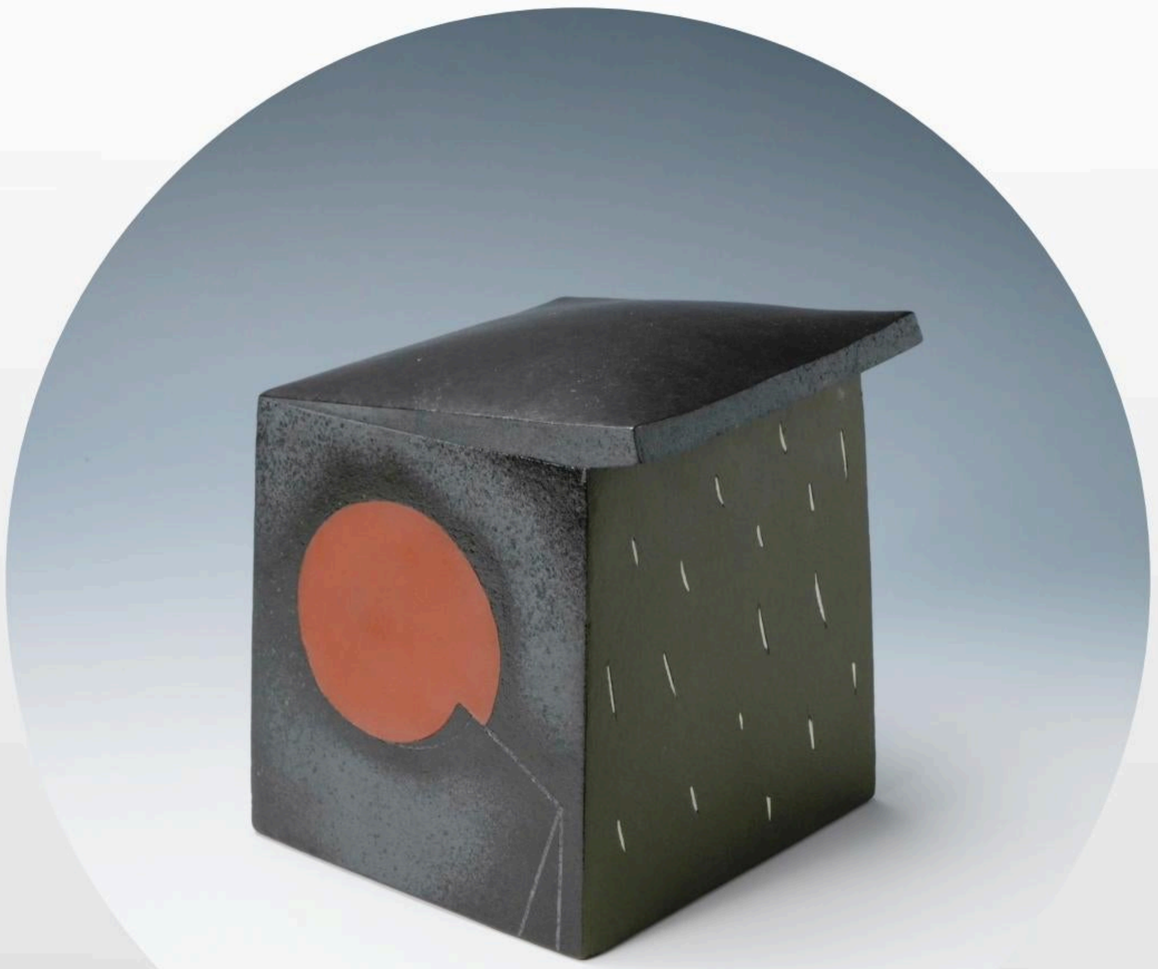
In this exhibition postcard, we are introduced to a showcase of artworks from the Shikokai movement, held in 1956 at the galleries of Ohara Kaikan, the Ohara School of Ikebana. Notably, this institution actively engaged in the avant-garde ikebana movement during Japan's post-war period. The central focus of the postcard features a ladder-like organic plant-like motif rising on the right.

During this historical juncture in Japan, ladders emerged as prevalent motifs in graphic design, geometric abstraction, and various artistic movements influenced by Western trends. The ladder motif, with its dual aspects, encapsulates both a representation of construction and industry, and a symbolism of growth and progress. The juxtaposition of these elements suggests a nuanced exploration of the evolving mindset during the postwar era in Japan.

The presence of such a motif on the postcard may be interpreted as a collective expression of the prevailing mentality and a shared desire among artists to forge new artistic and social identities independent of traditional constraints. In this context, the use of the ladder motif becomes a visual language conveying the era's aspiration for innovation and departure from convention, reflecting a transformative period in Japanese artistic history.



(Left & Right) 2 views of Hayashi Yasuo 林康夫 (b. 1928)
No. 3 Memory of a Fable 寓舎の記憶 05-A, 2005
With Signed Wood Box
Stoneware
(h) 11.6" x (w) 10.2"x (d) 8.7"



SQUARE SHADOWS

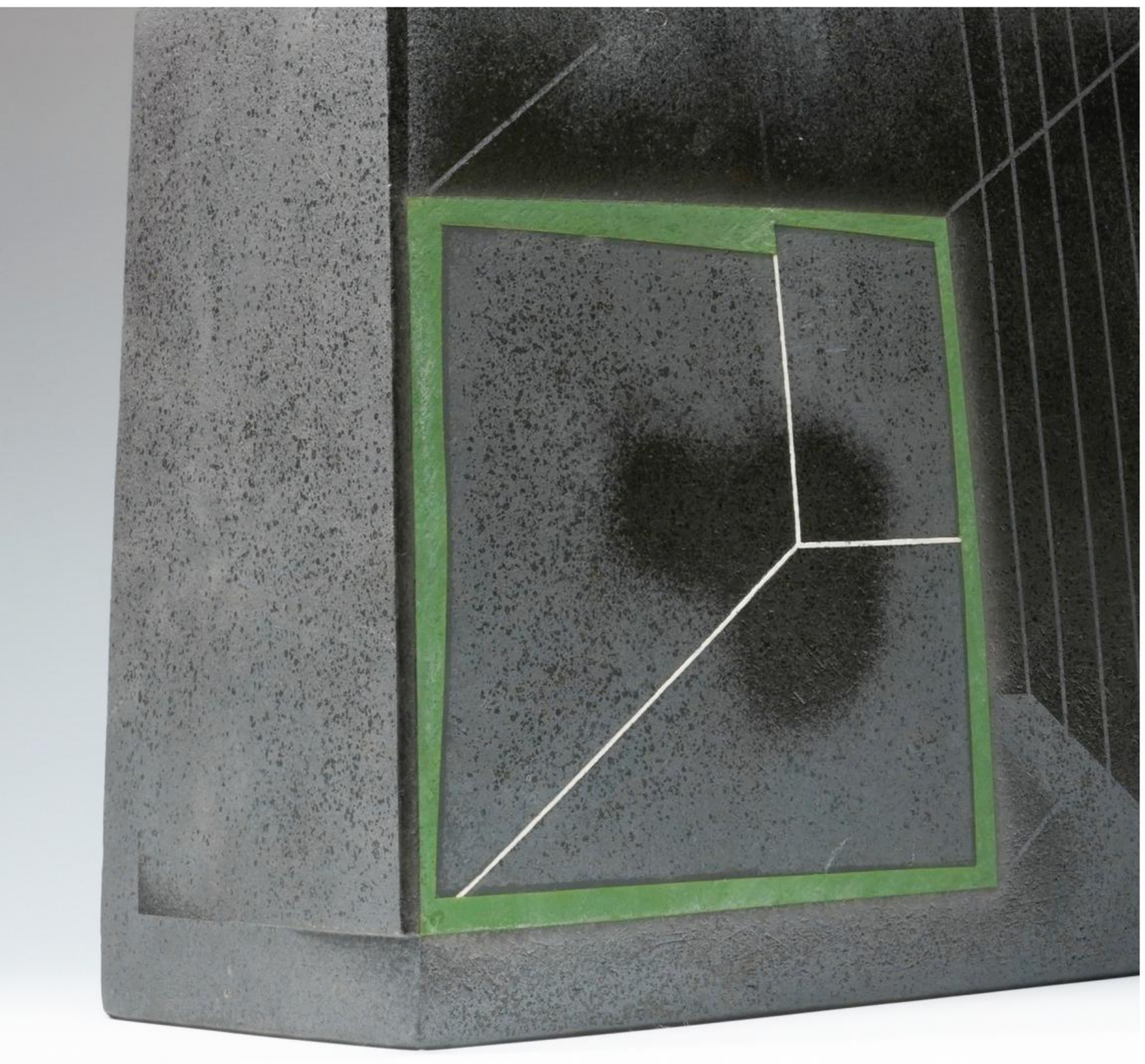
Rain falls on one side, while the red sun rises on the other. Or perhaps, does a harvest moon wane against evening sky? What shadows impress themselves against the walls of homes?

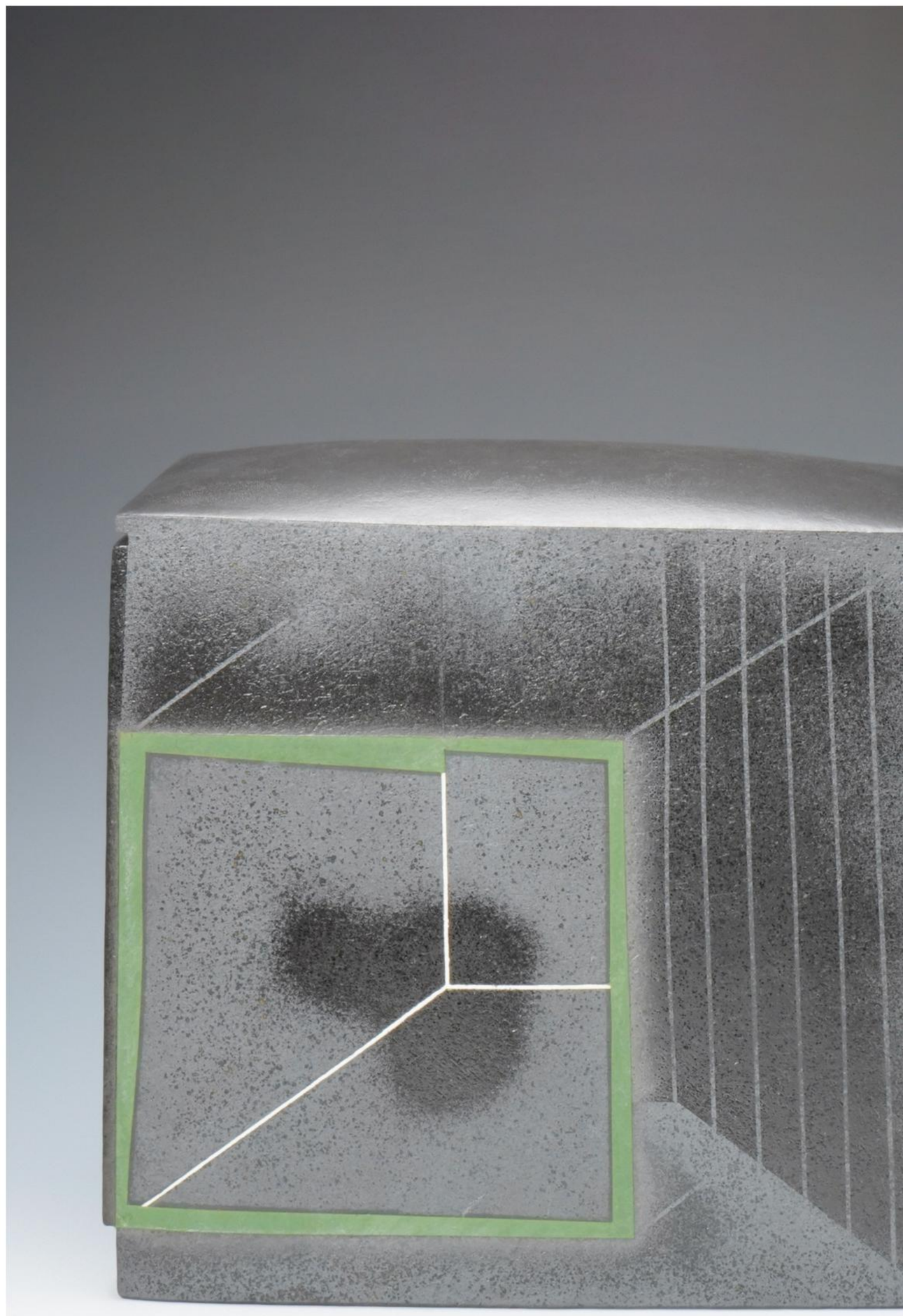
Set against a backdrop of bisque-fired stoneware, Hayashi's visions, seen outside the windows of a Japanese-style home, are captured in scenes of nature represented in geometric fashion on the surfaces of this object: One can interpret much symbolism in "Square Shadow." Hayashi Yasuo, born in 1928, left his imprint on the Parisian art scene by exhibiting his ceramic works alongside Isamu Noguchi. His later works, such as this piece, features geometric motifs inspired by his wartime experiences, further this evolution, marking a transition from visual representation to a deeper exploration of memory and form.

(Above) Hayashi Yasuo 林康夫 (b. 1928)
SQUARE SHADOW 14-1 方影 十四ノ一, 2014
Signed '14 Yasuo at the bottom; With Signed Wood Box
Stoneware; (h) 6.5" x (w) 6" x (d) 6"

(Left) An early piece by Hayashi, which was exhibited alongside Isamu Noguchi in 1965.

Hayashi Yasuo 林康夫 (b. 1928)
No. 4 Window, 2010
With Signed Wood Box
Stoneware; (h) 11.8" x (w) 12.4" x (d) 6.2"





Hayashi Yasuo 林康夫 (b. 1928)
House 17-B 寓舍 17-B, 2017
With Signed Wood Box
Stoneware; (h) 9.4" x (w) 6.8" x (d) 6.5"

GEOMETRIC ABSTRACTION

The three-dimensional object by Hayashi Yasuo provides a canvas with multiple surfaces, allowing for the expression of intricate geometric designs. Within the confines of this single object, each design also establishes a relationship with the others, creating a harmonious interplay. Titled "余話" or "Additional Note," this piece represents a smaller and more contemporary facet of Hayashi's artistic repertoire.

In this artwork, a balanced form reminiscent of his "House" series emerges, drawing inspiration from traditional Japanese houses in the 1940s. The surfaces of each side of the piece feature a subtle bisque-fired texture, evoking the feel of metal and iron, which introduces an almost industrial aesthetic.

Hayashi's commitment to geometric abstraction is evident in the intricate designs on the piece. His dedication to elevating ceramics as a form of artistic expression is captured in his words: "At the time, ceramics were viewed as a second-class art form, but I wanted it to be seen as a mode of expression on the same par with painting and sculpture."

(Four views, pages left & right)
Hayashi Yasuo 林康夫 (b. 1928)
No. 5 Additional Note 余話 17-2, 2017
With Signed Wood Box
Stoneware; (h) 3.9" x (w) 5.1" x (d) 3.9"

SODEISHA

走泥社

THE AVANT-GARDE & BEYOND

DANIEL MCOWAN

FREELANCE ART CURATOR

This exhibition focuses on some of the ceramicists associated with the avant-garde artists' associations Shikokai and Sodeisha. As a brief background:

Shikokai (Four Cultivations Association) was formed at the end of 1947 by Uno Sango (1902-1988), Hayashi Yasuo (b.1928), Shimizu Uichi (1926-2004), and Suzuki Yasuyuki (1926-?) (or Kimura Morikazu (1921-2015) (1) with the aim of 'cultivating the four directions' of contemporary art (ceramics, sculpture, painting, and photography). Unfortunately, it had a short life, and within two years of its founding, Shimizu Uichi and Kimura Morikazu had departed. However, Uno Sango and Hayashi Yasuo continued until 1956 before it ceased altogether. Hayashi later joined Sodeisha in 1962.

Around the same time, another artists' association, Seinen Sakutoka Shudan (The Young Pottery Maker's Collective), was formed in September 1946 by Nakajima Kiyoshi (1907-1986). It, too, had a brief existence before disbanding in July 1948. Nakajima later joined Sodeisha in 1951.

Out of this organization, Five of its main participants, Yagi Kazuo (1918-1979), Matsui Yoshiyuke (1926-?), Kano Tetsuo (1899-1998), Yamada Hikaru (1923-2001), and Suzuki Osamu (1926-2001) joined to form a new organization in late 1948 called Sodeisha (Crawling through Mud Association). Kano and Matsui resigned in 1949, leaving Yagi, Yamada, and Suzuki as its founding members. The reference to 'crawling through mud' had two connotations. It could refer to the monotony of the daily tasks these young artists performed, but it actually refers to glaze flaws that appear in Chinese Jun ware. Derived from a Chinese expression describing these flaws as resulting from something 'crawling through mud,' these same marks are referred to as 'earthworm markings' in the West (see Fig. 1). Sodeisha continued from 1948 to 1998, and over those fifty years, its influence persisted, entering history as the main avant-garde ceramics association in Japan.

Loose groups, such as these three aforementioned associations, were the norm in Japan at this time, and there were others that came and went during both the pre- and post-war eras (2). Frequently, they provided a framework for organizing independent exhibitions in a Japan where non-government-sponsored exhibitions were something of a rarity.

In addition, ceramicists' incomes were often insufficient to enable one-person exhibitions, and frequently , the exhibitors were juried, which eliminated younger participants.

The first association, Shikokai, is not well-documented in Western literature on Japanese ceramics, but within its framework, Hayashi Yasuo was the first Japanese artist to produce sculptural ceramics. Yagi Kazuo is frequently credited with achieving this, as he intellectually approached the idea as producing ceramic objets (French objet, English object), whereas Hayashi intended to produce fine art, i.e., sculpture, even though the material he used was ceramic. Historically, Hayashi's pieces appeared around 1948, whereas Yagi's "Mr. Samsa's Walk" did not appear until 1954 (3).

Figure 1. Rectangular Flowerpot with Four Small Feet, Harvard Art Museums/Arthur M. Sackler Museum, Gift of Ernest B. and Helen Pratt Dane, Photo © President and Fellows of Harvard College, 1942.185.21.

Yagi Kazuo 八木一夫 (1918-1979)
Black Work 黒陶作品, Late 1950's – Early 1960's
With Signed Wood Box, Signed by his son, Yagi Akira
Stoneware
Work: (h) 13" x (w) 4.1" x (d) 3.1"
Wooden stand: (h) 17.7" x (w) 5.5" x (d) 4.1"

Much can be written about Sodeisha and its main players, but perhaps what stands out most clearly when analyzing the work from its members is the singular absence of what would be called a 'Sodeisha style.' There is a sense in the West that Sodeisha is an 'ism,' akin to cubism, futurism, impressionism, etc., but in reality, it was an association formed to share ideas and aspirations. It's only real theorist was Yagi Kazuo, and he was as much a practicing potter as he was a theorist. Nonetheless, respect for his ideas and leadership seemed to be the glue that kept the organization together. Yagi was six years older than Yamada Hikaru and eight years older than Suzuki Osamu, and his maturity undoubtedly added to his authority as the leader of the group. Additionally, he was widely read, interested in Western poetry and music, and frequently wrote in contemporary publications about the world of ceramics.

To younger, emerging ceramicists, his charisma would have been both stimulating and challenging. It was he who penned the Sodeisha manifesto that still reads like a piece of surrealist poetry!

Yagi played a similar role in Sodeisha to that performed by Yanagi Soetsu (1889-1961) for the mingei potters in providing it with a theoretical framework. In many ways, he was perhaps a better theorist than a potter. The potting skills resided with the better-trained Suzuki Osamu (4), but the skill in understanding that Sodeisha was the harbinger of a new ceramic world lay with Yagi alone. He challenged the norms of his era and presented alternative approaches. He was indeed a true leader of his generation, and this continued from 1948 when Sodeisha arose until his death in 1979. It's a small point, but significant that the leitmotif black wares that Yagi produced from 1957 onwards (for example, see p. 58) were not imitated until after his death out of deference to him. (5)

What Sodeisha really represented for its members was freedom from a singular style and, more clearly, the freedom to respond impulsively to what the artist wanted to do with the clay—or, perhaps, as Yagi Kazuo would have it, what the clay wanted to do itself. Looking at the production of members of this group over the many years of its existence, it is obvious that Sodeisha presented a framework in which freedom of expression was the dominant theme. Yes, we can say there were early influences such as Chinese Cizhou ware, Korean Goryeo ware, and European modernist painters, among others, that stimulated Yagi Kazuo, and to a lesser degree, Suzuki Osamu and Yamada Hikaru. However, ultimately, these influences were secondary to the notion that this was a youthful post-war organization dedicated to the exuberance of creativity itself. For many of its members committed to a day turning out repetitive domestic ceramics, Sodeisha provided the excuse and camaraderie to just exclaim a different approach—an unhindered expression of self—and letting the beloved clay direct the outcome.

That is not to say that stylistic analysis cannot be applied to the individual participants because, taken individually, the work of artists associated with Sodeisha reflects many identifiable influences.

Hayashi Yasuo 林康夫 (b. 1928)
SQUARE SHADOW 14-1 方影 十四ノ一, 2014
Signed ’14 Yasuo at the bottom; With Signed Wood Box
Stoneware; (h) 6.5” x (w) 6” x (d) 6”

In this exhibition, some works are from the Sodeisha period (1948-1984) but not necessarily intended for annual Sodeisha exhibitions, the main public expression of the association. All the Sodeisha members made utilitarian works for a living, and these works appear in far greater quantities than those intended for special exhibitions—if the two can, in fact, be separated. The spirit of Sodeisha nonetheless infuses the utilitarian work as well, giving it an edge and differentiating it to the degree that there is always an incipient sense of experimentation in even the most conventional of these pieces

In its early days, Sodeisha provided a framework for the cross-fertilization of ideas, and even Yagi Kazuo’s work occasionally reflects the influence of Suzuki Osamu or Yamada Hikaru. Some of the early vases by Yagi Kazuo and Suzuki Osamu resemble one another in their tall oval forms, not to mention their black-on-white decoration inspired by Chinese Cizhou wares. Similarly, two works in the exhibition from Hayashi Yasuo’s earlier period (p. 18-22) reflect the brown and irabo-glazed wares of Suzuki Osamu. These works all emanate from a time before the artists' individual styles matured and they reflect the sense of experimentation that was at the core of Sodeisha’s rationale. Suzuki Osamu’s current catalogues suggest that he mainly worked with seihakuji (blue celadon) or brown glazes, but other works in ash, oribe, and irabo glazes are also in the market

Hayashi Yasuo (b. 1928, Shikokai 1947-56, Sodeisha 1962-1977) is predominantly represented by his late works, in which he brilliantly plays with his 'buildings' - derived from his aerial views of Japan as a World War II airman - to create both representational or trompe l'oeil effects, enlivening the surface and challenging the viewer to analyze his forms more deeply.

Yagi Kazuo (1918-1979, Sodeisha 1948-1979) is represented by one work dating from the early 1960s when his production of blackware (kokuto) was at its peak. This period reflects Yagi’s mature style, and his original forms continue to reflect the talent that emerged at the start of Sodeisha.

Suzuki Osamu (1926-2001, Sodeisha 1948-1998) produced brown-glazed and celadon wares throughout his life. Acknowledged as the best technical potter among the Sodeisha founders, his refined work straddles the perfection of Kyoto ceramics and the experimental nature of Sodeisha's work.

Yamada Hikaru 山田光 (1923-2001)
No. 78 Fossilized Vase, 1976
Stoneware
(h) 18.8” x (w) 12.2” x (d) 2.3”

Yamada Hikaru (1923-2001, Sodeisha 1948-1998) is represented with three screens, three sculptures, and a vase. While the vase reflects the graceful utilitarian wares common to all Sodeisha artists at some point, the other six works are truly experimental pieces. Yamada's sculptures of forms joined with tubes gradually morph into a minimalist-inspired, metallic-glazed pipe topped with a bar at right angles. His experimentation pushes the form to its fundamental components, reaching as far from conventional ceramics as possible. His sculptures in the form of screens are distantly influenced by byobu, or Japanese screens, but at this point, surrealism intersects to create forms reminiscent of doors or windows. These are all superb sculptures by this much-sought-after artist.

Kumakura Junkichi (1920-1985, Sodeisha 1957-85) joined Sodeisha later but continued its spirit through to the end. After a somewhat conventional start, his work became experimental and never ceased being so. He was perhaps the most strongly attracted to surrealism, and many of his works express the concepts of that European movement.

Fujimoto Yoshimichi (1919-1992, Sodeisha 1957-1963) became the pre-eminent 20th-century on-glaze decorator and is the least experimental of the artists in this exhibition. Interestingly, he was in Sodeisha for a brief six years, but that seems sufficient to give him the edge with his on-glaze work to achieve the status he did. He went on as a teacher, and his influence has maintained the skills of on-glaze painting among Japanese artists

Miwa Ryosaku (b. 1940, Sodeisha 1968-1975) was part of the 'second generation' that joined Sodeisha and is the eldest son of Hagi Living National Treasure Miwa Kyusetsu XI (1910-2012). His younger brother, Kazuhiko (b. 1951), became Kyusetsu XII to continue the Hagi tradition, enabling the older brother to pursue his conceptual works. Two works in the exhibition are from his recent series, 'The Scripture of Himiko,' with corroded forms covered in gold metallic glaze. These are paired with two earlier works using Hagi glaze, reflecting his regional and family origins.

Satonaka Hideto (1932-1989, Sodeisha 1971-1979, and his name can also be read as Satonaka Hiromu), takes a series of small bowls and stacks them to create a vase. The piece may look like a kiln mistake, with everything

Satonaka Hideto (Hiromu) 里中英人 (1932-1989)
Vessel 'Utsuwa' 器, c. 1976
With Signed Wood Box
Stoneware; (h) 7.4" x (w) 6.5" x (d) 4.5"

fused by the glaze, but upon handling the piece, you discover it is hollow down the middle.

Hoshino Satoru (b. 1945, Sodeisha 1974-1981) had a brief time with Sodeisha, mostly producing blackwares, and then went his own way to produce some of the most expressive ceramics of his age. His sculptural, pinched pots are striking both because of the scale of their hand-built forms and their complex glazing. Themed around the idea of thawing snow, the white glaze represents the snow, whereas the blue glaze it sits over can be seen as the sky.

Shibata Shigeru (b. 1950, Sodeisha 1975-1984) is the youngest artist in the exhibition, who again plays on the form of his work. It is a vase, but its off-center construction suggests that it could be representing something like a Heian-period courtier's hat (kanmuri), a form that occasionally appears in Arita ceramics. Its other connection with Sodeisha is the use of smoking in the kiln to create its blackware body, a quiet homage to Yagi Kazuo that a number of second-generation Sodeisha members continued to use.

Daniel McOwan
February 2024

Note 1: These were the founding members nominated by Hayashi Yasuo in 四耕会 京都をとりま断面　戦前・戦中・戦後　前衛陶芸集団：四耕会誕生前夜〜前衛陶芸発生の頃　四耕会創立メンバー林康夫の回顧を中心に　坂上しのぶ（ギャラリ (A cross-section of Kyoto: before, during, and after the war Avant-garde ceramics group Shikokai by Sakagami Shinobu). Aoyama Wahei credits Kimura Morikazu as being the 4th founding member instead of Suzuki Yasuyuki in [http://www.e-yakimono.net/japanese-ceramics-now/jcn-2.html].

Note 2: Listed in Japanische Keramik – Aufbruch im 20.Juhrhundert by Gisela Jahn, VDG Weimar, 2014 [p.239 – Pre-war groups] [pp.306-308 – Post-war groups].

Note 3: A photographic comparison is pictured in Contemporary Japanese Ceramics Fired with Passion Samuel J. Lurie and Beatrice L. Chang, Eagle Art Publishing, New York 2006. pp.25,26.

Note 4: Suzuki Osamu trained at the Kyoto Municipal Technical College as a potter, Yagi trained as an art teacher. See Isamu Noguchi and Modern Japanese Ceramics Louise Allison Cort and Bert Winther-Tamaki, Arthur M. Sackler Gallery in association with University of California Press, Berkley, Los Angeles and London, 2003. p.159.

Note 5: See Louise Allison Cort in Ceramics and Modernity in Japan Meghen Jones and Louise Allison Cort (editors), Routledge, New York, 2020. p. 182.

(Middle) Kumakura Junkichi 熊倉順吉 (1920-1985)
Blue And White Glaze Over White Slip
Big Plate With Abstract Bird 青白釉 白化粧 鳥文大皿, 1950's
Signed on the Plate and Back; With Signed Wood Box
Stoneware; (h) 2" x (diameter) 12.3"

(Right) Suzuki Osamu 鈴木治 (1926-2001)
Tube Flower Vase with Black Wheel Track 黒絵輪立 筒型花生,1950's
With Signed Wood Box
Stoneware; (h) 8.3 x (diameter) 2.6"

KUMAKURA JUNKICHI

Kumakura Junkichi's departure from functional ceramics to avant-garde, experimental and sculptural forms serves as a compelling exploration of the interplay between playfulness and sculpture. This is evident in his incorporation of surrealistic influences and his inventive manipulation of space and form. While paying homage to conventional styles such as Nabeshima ware and Rimpa, Junkichi introduces a minimalist aesthetic that stands in stark contrast to the ornate inclinations of the Meiji period. This bold departure signifies an innovative shift in the ongoing discourse between the tangible and the void.

The iconic Irabo glaze has been used in the creation of daily vessels since the Korean Goryeo dynasty. Unearthed from sites in Busan and Yangsan, this ash glaze is renowned for its distinctive ash effects. Modern Japanese potters have long admired and sought to replicate this technique.

The ash glaze, applied to functional objects, gracefully descends down the vessel's walls. Kumakura Junkichi harnesses the inherent qualities of ash, leveraging its weight and gravity to create an object that engages with these forces.

FORM AND PLAY

While it may initially appear as a sculpture, the piece gradually reveals its purpose as a flower vase. Thoughtfully designed, it features openings within its folds to accommodate flower stems. The organic, biomorphic forms of the vase offer a touch of the grotesque. In this artwork, Junkichi skillfully navigates the delicate balance between form and function, leading the viewer playfully in one direction while ultimately presenting the true nature of the object in a different light.

Kumakura Junkichi 熊倉順吉 (1920-1985)
Irabo Glazed Flower Vessel 伊羅保釉 花器, 1970's
With Signed Wood Box
Stoneware; (h) 4.9" x (w) 8.4" x (d) 8.3"

Kumakura Junkichi 熊倉順吉 (1920-1985)
Oribe Glazed Vessel 1 織部釉花生, 1970's
With Wood Signed Box
Stoneware; (h) 6.8" x (diameter) 8.7"

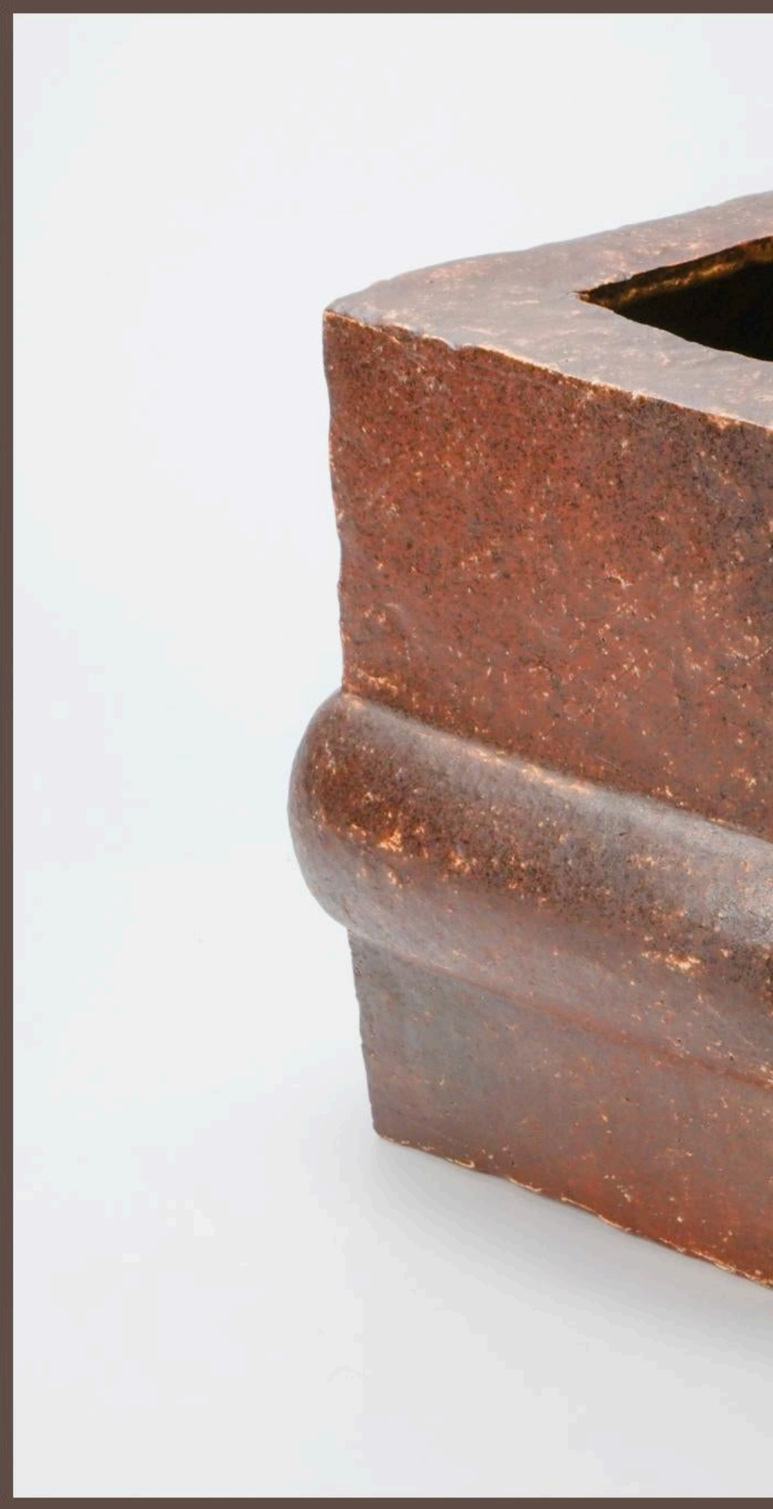
Kumakura Junkichi 熊倉順吉 (1920-1985)
Oribe Glazed Vessel 2 織部釉花生, 1970's
With Signed Wood Box
Stoneware; (h) 5.5" x (diameter) 9"

YAGI KAZUO & THE WEST

In the mid-20th century, the unmistakable influence of Western modernist currents on Yagi Kazuo became evident. His work began to draw parallels with the sculptural forms of artists such as Barbara Hepworth, resonating with the aesthetics of avant-garde figures from Joan Miró to Cy Twombly. This period signifies a crucial chapter in the ongoing dialogue between Japanese ceramics and Western art. It showcases a fusion of organic and abstract elements, resulting in a tactile and visual synthesis that is both timeless and distinctly modern.

Yagi Kazuo 八木一夫 (1918-1979)
Black Work 黒陶作品, Late 1950's – Early 1960's
With Signed Wood Box, Signed by his son, Yagi Akira
Stoneware
Work: (h) 13" x (w) 4.1" x (d) 3.1"
Wooden stand: (h) 17.7" x (w) 5.5" x (d) 4.1"

Suzuki Osamu 鈴木治(1926-2001)
"Cap of Cloud" 雲の帽子, 1984
Signed す ’84 at the bottom
With Signed Wood Box
Stoneware
(h) 24.5” x (d) 10” x (w) 15.2”



SUZUKI IN THE 60's

The 1960s witnessed Suzuki Osamu skillfully blending traditional craftsmanship with modern abstract forms. His work resonates with the sculptural innovations of Isamu Noguchi and the minimalism of the celebrated Romanian artist Constantin Brâncuși, yet stands out with a unique originality grounded in real-world references. This era of exploration and innovation highlights the nuanced dynamics of cultural exchange, transitioning from a predominant flow of influence from Japan to the West to a more reciprocal exchange that has enriched the global art landscape.

Regarded as one of the most influential sculptors of the 20th century and a trailblazer in modernism, Brâncuși is often referred to as the patriarch of modern sculpture. His influence is notably manifested in the interplay of geometry and organic lines evident in this piece. The inverted triangle converges at the center-point of the vessel, characterized by its rounded and biomorphic form. Suzuki, in his work titled "Vessel," directs attention to the interplay between utility and function, all the while referencing the distinctive thoughts of modernist sculpture.

Suzuki Osamu 鈴木治 (1926-2001)
Vessel 器, 1960
Signed Su す at the back
With Signed Wood Box
Stoneware with Glaze and Slip
(h) 10.5” x (w) 10.5” x (d) 10.5”

NFS Suzuki Osamu 鈴木治 (1926-2001)
Animals of the Chinese Zodiac, c. 1980's
Porcelain & celadon glaze
From left to right: Dog, Dragon, Boar, Monkey, Rabbit, Sheep

NFS Suzuki Osamu 鈴木治 (1926-2001)
Animals of the Chinese Zodiac, c. 1980's
Porcelain & celadon glaze
From left to right: Tiger, Mouse, Ox, Ram, Horse, Snake

Suzuki Osamu 鈴木治 (1926-2001)
Horse Form "Uma-No-Yakata" 馬ノ屋形, 1980
With Signed Wood Box
Stoneware
(h) 19.7" x (w) 10.9" x (d) 10.0"

Suzuki Osamu 鈴木治 (1926-2001)
Celadon Plate, “Boat” 平鉢 舟, 1978
Signed す Su at the back
With Signed Wood Box
Porcelain and celadon glaze
(h) 3.3" x (diameter) 15"

(Left) Miwa Ryosaku 三輪龍作 (b. 1940)
The Scripture of Himiko 卑弥呼 1
With Signed Wood Box
Stoneware with Gold Luster
(h) 5"x (w) 6.6"x (d) 3.2"

(Right) Miwa Ryosaku 三輪龍作 (b. 1940)
The Scripture of Himiko 卑弥呼 2
With Signed Wood Box
Stoneware with Gold Luster
(h) 8.5"x (w) 7"x (d) 5.5"

HIMIKO

Almost three centuries before Japan became an organized imperial state, the renowned Shamaness-Ruler Himiko governed the Yamatai federation of kingdoms across the islands in the 3rd century C.E. Associated with supernatural arcana, Himiko's mythos evolved over centuries, often tied to ritual objects like bronze balls and mirrors. Miwa Ryosaku's series, "The Scripture of Himiko," bathed in gold lustre, delves into how time shapes historical figures. His work highlights historical lacunae, emphasizing the inherent imperfection of human history due to the inability to precisely articulate events. This series represents a pivotal phase in Miwa's oeuvre.

Through the lore behind Himiko’s reputation and imagined mythos, his inquiries on time, the movements of the universe, and human history have successfully articulated a tripartite concept that looks beyond man-made philosophies. He has developed an artistic process and visual vocabulary that grapples with time through the ceramic medium.

MIWA RYOSAKU: LOVE SERIES

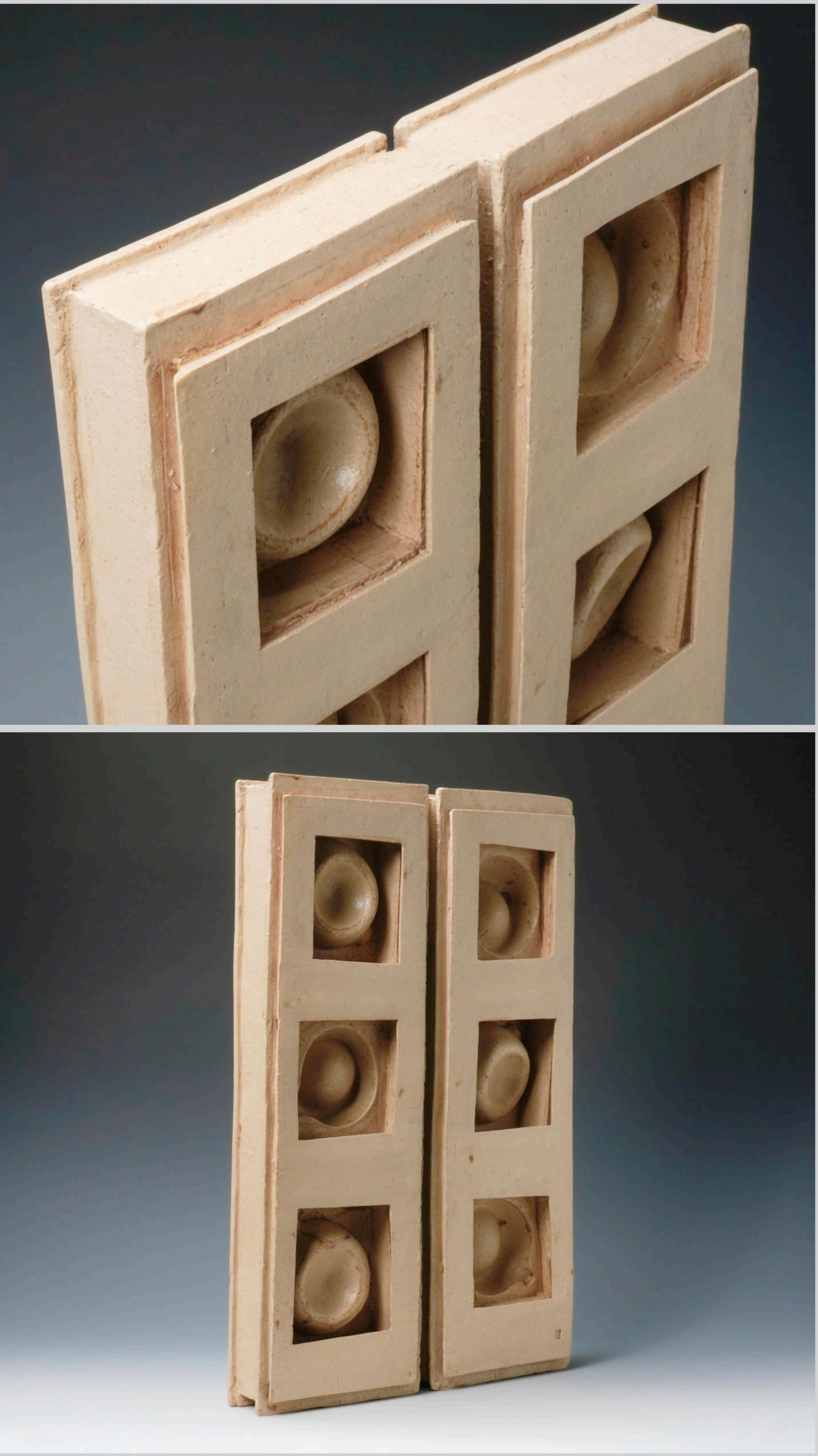
Miwa Ryosaku (b. 1940) was born into the prestigious Miwa pottery family. The twelfth member of his family to hold the title “Kyusetsu 休雪,” the artist closely observed his father and uncle creating Hagi pottery from a young age, quickly becoming familiar with the style’s distinctive materials and techniques. He is also known as Miwa Kyusetsu XII, but to express his individuality as an artist and sculptor while maintaining his potter heritage, he assumed the name Miwa Ryosaku and published several artworks under this name to delineate between the professional identities of artist, sculptor, and potter.

While Miwa uses the characteristic white tones of traditional Hagi glaze, which has been in use for twelve generations, he departs from tradition in both form and function. The artist renders spontaneous personal feelings in clay, exposing human passion and emotion not unlike the masters of Western modernity. Miwa studied Goya, Van Gogh, and Soutine as a student in Tokyo and admired the powerful expressionism of Modernist painting.

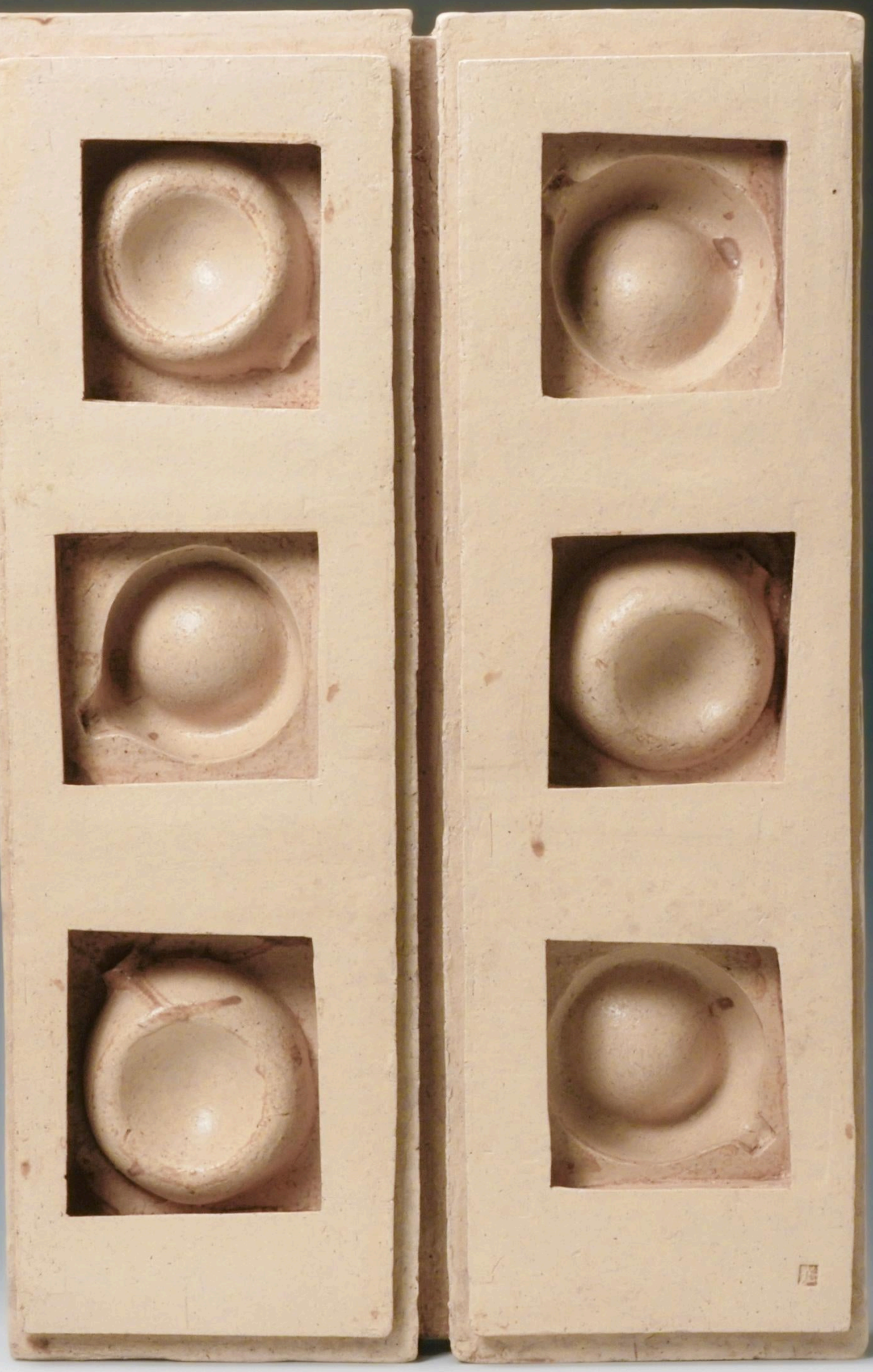
Miwa Ryosaku 三輪龍作 (b. 1940)
Hagi White Glazed Sculpture "LOVE"
Signed “Ryo 龍” at the bottom
With Signed Wood Box
Stoneware
(h) 13.7" x (w) 15" x (d) 7"

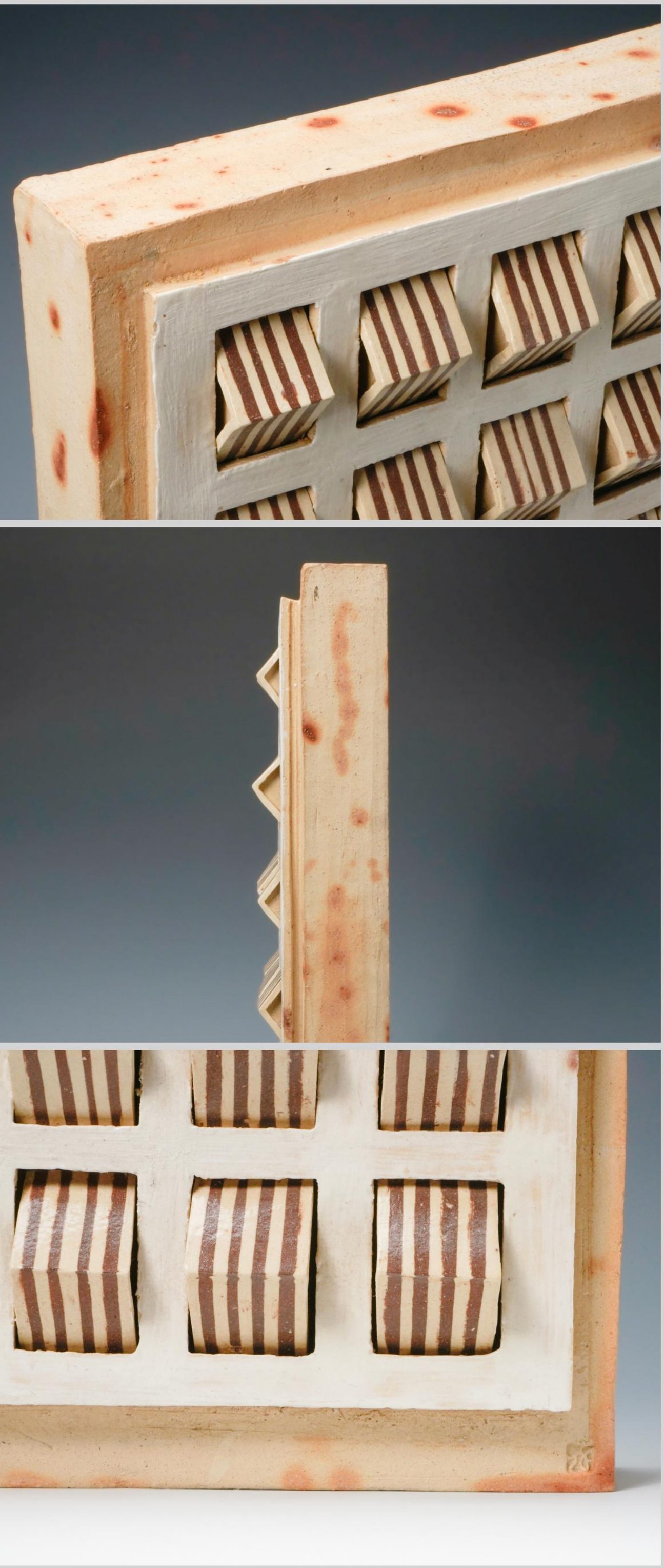
Miwa Ryosaku 三輪龍作 (b. 1940)
Hagi White Glazed Sculpture "LOVE"
(Triangle), 1993
With Signed Wood Box
Stoneware
(h) 8.7" x (w) 9.3" x (d) 5.4"

LOVE



Yamada Hikaru 山田光 (1923-2001)
No. 78 Fossilized Vase, 1976
Stoneware
(h) 18.8” x (w) 12.2” x (d) 2.3”





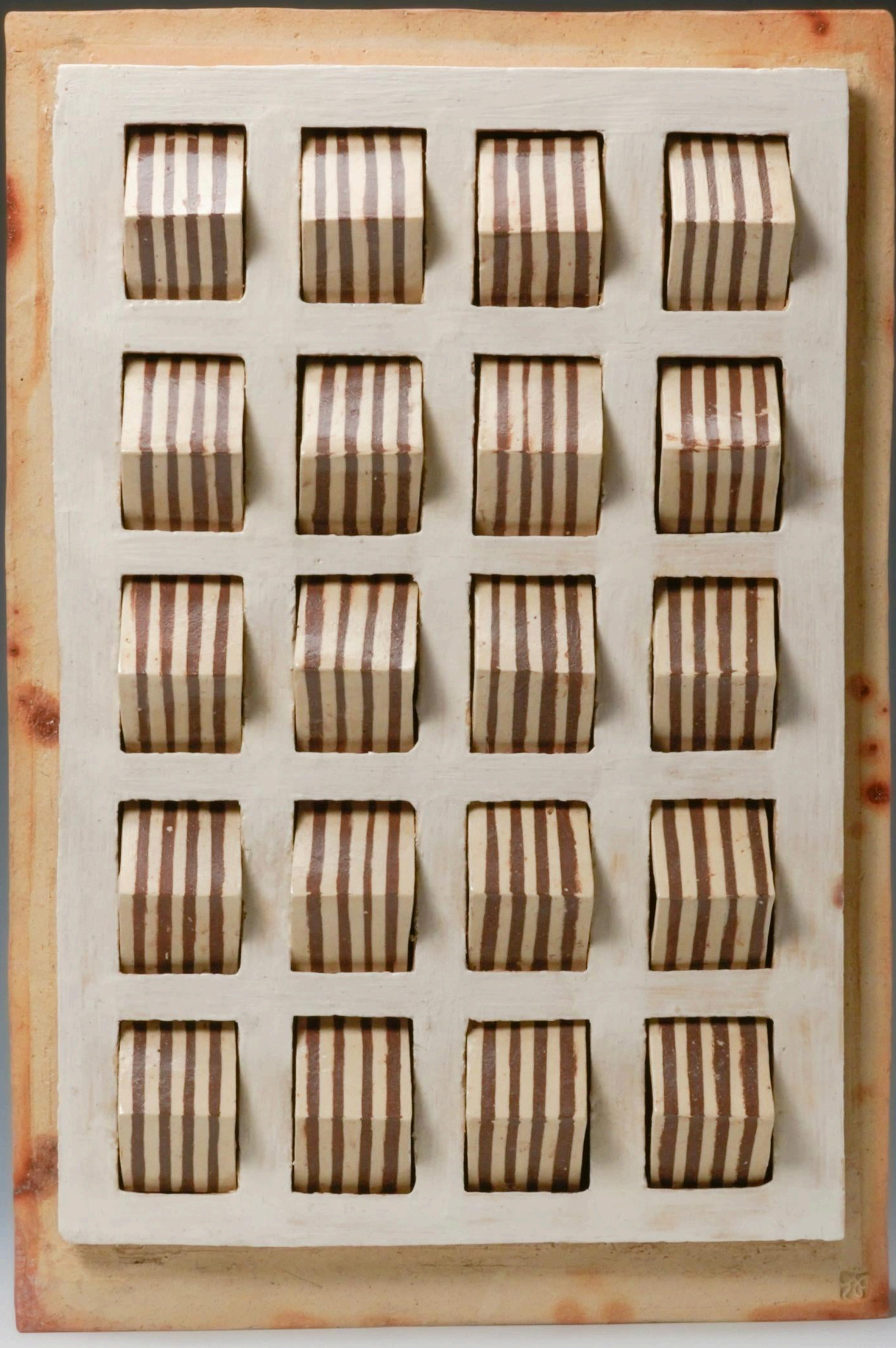
YAMADA HIKARU IN THE 70'S

“Convex Juts in a Clay Plane” is a work by Yamada Hikaru in the 1970's. Although its initial appearance may suggest simplicity, the artwork gradually unfurls into a complex puzzle, revealing intricacies upon closer examination. The geometric triangular protrusions rising from the impeccably straight ceramic plane surface, while inherently geometric, curiously evoke elements of nature with inherent mathematical qualities. This can be likened to the ordered patterns found in beehives. Intriguingly, Yamada introduces a biomorphic quality through sharply defined geometric lines, adding an enigmatic layer to the piece. Notably, this artwork draws inspiration from Byobu, or folding screens.

In this period, Yamada actively explored the interplay between two and three dimensions within the ceramic medium, showcasing a facet of his artistic repertoire that has matured through experimentation with two-dimensional forms.

Three years following the creation of this artwork, in 1979, Yamada took on the role of a professor at Osaka University of Arts. This phase marked a transformative period in his artistic style, characterized by experiments with diverse materials, such as black ceramic and palladium silver, as seen in the later pages of this catalog. This material shift was, in part, a response to the passing of Yagi Kazuo in the same year—a figure with whom Yamada shared a close connection throughout their careers.

Yamada Hikaru 山田光 (1923-2001)
Convex Juts in a Clay Plane 陶面の中の凸面, 1976
Glazed Ceramic
(h) 17.25” x (w) 13.75” x (d) 3.87”



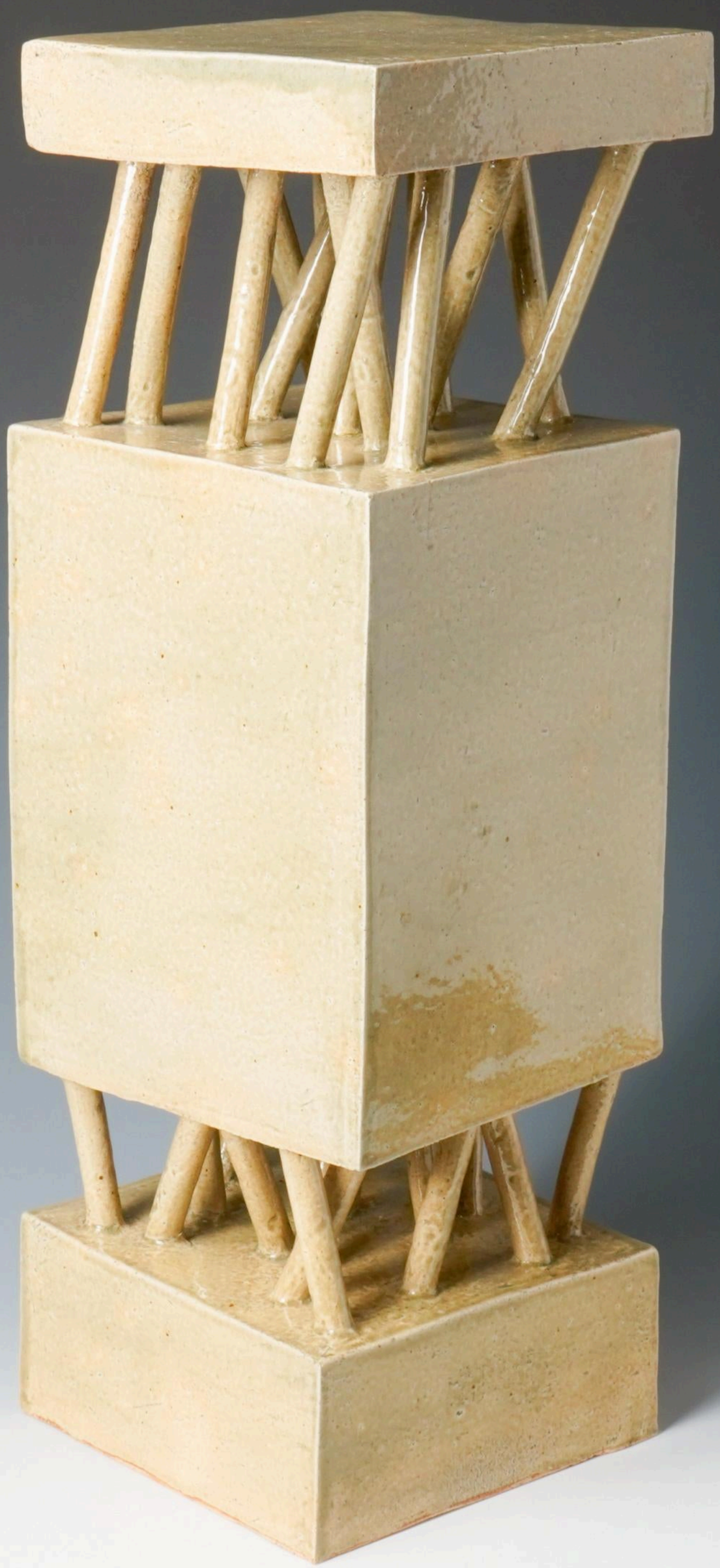
VISIONS OF TATLIN’S TOWER

Tatlin's visionary Constructivist tower, a monumental design by Russian artist Vladimir Tatlin, remained unrealized. Conceived with industrial materials like glass and steel, it symbolized modernity through a 400-meter twin helix. Despite never being built, its enduring influence is evident in contemporary art, such as Ai Weiwei's "Fountain of Light" (2007) and Yamada Hikaru's "disks and tubes," which echoes the tower's envisioned materials and geometric forms, as noted by Jeffrey Horvitz.

(Right) Model of the Monument to the Third International (Vladimir Tatlin’s Tower) in the workshop Material, Space and Construction, the workshop for mosaics of the former Academy of Fine Arts, Petrograd 1920.

Yamada Hikaru 山田光 (1923-2001)
Disks and Tubes 円盤とパイプ No. 109, 1979
Signed Hikaru 光 in the back
1979 Exhibited at Isetan Department store
Published ”CLAY WORK BY YAMADA HIKARU”, 2004, Sekaishisosha Co., Ltd
(h) 15.7” x (w) 9.8” x (d) 7.8"; Stoneware

Yamada Hikaru 山田光 (1923-2001)
Boxes and Tubes 題不詳 [箱とパイプ] No.114, 1979
(h) 20.3” x (w) 6.6” x (d) 6.6”
Stoneware
Signed Hikaru 光 lower left
Published ”CLAY WORK BY YAMADA HIKARU”, 2004, Sekaishisosha Co., Ltd



Yamada Hikaru 山田光 (1923-2001) & Masuda Studio Gallery
No. 343 Kasukanaru Koe (“Fading Voice”) かすかなる声, 2000
Signed Hikaru 光, Published ”CLAY WORK BY YAMADA HIKARU”, 2004, Sekaishisosha Co., Ltd
Stoneware; (h) 6.9” x (w) 20.6” x (d) 3.4”

(Above) Pablo Picasso, Bull’s Head, 1942, Bronze, Private Collection.

(Right) Yamada HIkaru 山田光 (1923-2001), Silver-Glazed Pipe 銀泥パイプ No.316, 1995
(h) 27.6” x (w) 15.2” x (d) 2.1”
Stoneware, Stainless steel
1995 Exhibited at Isetan department store, Signed Hikaru 光 at lower back, Published ”CLAY WORK BY YAMADA HIKARU”, 2004, Sekaishisosha Co., Ltd

Satonaka Hideto (Hiromu) 里中英人 (1932-1989)
Vessel ‘Utsuwa’ 器, c. 1976
With Signed Wood Box
Stoneware; (h) 7.4" x (w) 6.5" x (d) 4.5"

Shibata Shigeru 柴田繁 (b. 1950)
Black Glazed Vase 黒釉器”起”
With Signed Wood Box
Stoneware; (h) 14.8" x (w) 8.2" x (d) 7.5"

Hoshino Satoru 星野暁 (b. 1945)
No. 3 Spring Snow 春の雪, 2017
With Signed Wood Box
Stoneware
(h) 16" x (w) 14"

Hoshino Satoru 星野暁 (b. 1945)
No. 4 Spring Snow 春の雪, 2022
With Signed Wood Box
Stoneware
(h) 18" x (w) 11"

(Above) Fujimoto Yoshimichi (Nodo) 藤本能道 (1919-1992)
Covered Box with Colored Glazes and Overglaze Enamels, Depicting Two Crows Nesting on Branches 釉描加彩樹陰宿鴉図四角筥, 1987
With Signed Wood Box; Porcelain; (h) 3.15"x (w) 8.6"x (d) 8.6

(Below) Fujimoto Yoshimichi (Nodo) 藤本能道 (1919-1992)
Covered Box with Colored Glazes and Overglaze Enamels, Depicting a Crow Nesting on Branches 蛤形四角筥
With Signed Wood Box; Porcelain; (h) 3.2" x (w) 8.5" x (w) x (d) 8.5"

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Authorship: Beatrice Chang, Kazuko Todate 外舘和子, Daniel McOwan, eds. Kristie Lui
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Model of the Monument to the Third International (also known Vladimir Tatlin's Tower) in the workshop Material, Space and Construction, the workshop for mosaics of the former Academy of Fine Arts, Petrograd 1920, Photo © Avery Architectural & Fine Arts Library, Graduate School of Architecture, Planning and Preservation (VRC), Columbia University in the City of New York.

Jesus Rafael Soto (1923–2005), Light Trap 1965; Construction of wood and nylon with printed paper; (h) 18.5" x (w) 11.7" x (d) 5.2"; Photo © Tate Britain, Transferred from the Victoria & Albert Museum, 1983; Reference number T03770.

Pablo Picasso, Bull's Head, 1942, Bronze, Private Collection. Photo © Museum of Modern Art (MoMA).

DAI ICHI ARTS, LTD.

18 EAST 64TH STREET, STE. 1F
NEW YORK, NY, 10065, USA

WWW.DAIICHIARTS.COM
212.230.1680 | 917.435.9473